INDIAN TRIBES

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Saraswat Library
206 Bidhan Sarani : : Calcutta 6

Publisher :
Prasanta Bhattacharya
Saraswat Library
206 Bidhan Sarani
Calcutta 6

First edition :
December 1971

Price :
Rupees Seventeen Only

Printer :
Bibhas Bhattacharjee
Saraswat Press
206 Bidhan Sarani
Calcutta 6

PREFACE

It is needless to emphasise the necessity of ethnographic study of the tribal population of a country. India is a country where varied types of tribals are met with, who constitute a considerable portion of the country's total population. This book is an attempt to present a first-hand knowledge of the tribal peoples of India (and Ceylon) keeping in view, primarily, the difficulty of a beginner-student. We hope that this book will be able to satisfy a long-standing demand in the field of tribal ethnography in India.

As it is not practicable to bring all the Indian tribes between the covers of a single volume with proper justice to them, ten representative tribes have been selected for the present purpose. The selection has been made in such a way that a fair idea of the entire tribal population of the country may be gathered from these ten tribes.

The criteria for selection have been territorial distribution, linguistic affiliation, ethnic affinity and economic organisation.

From the North-North-Eastern zone which includes eastern Kashmir, East Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, northern Uttar Pradesh and Assam, the Ao Naga and the Khasi have been selected. Linguistically, the Ao Naga belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family while the Khasi to the Austric family. Racially, both of them belong to the Mongoloid primary race. Economically, the Khasi is a settled cultivator but the Ao Naga is basically a shifting cultivator. From the Central zone, comprising Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, southern Uttar Pradesh,

Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra and Gujarat, four tribes viz. Santal, Oraon, Gond and Bhil have been picked up. Of these, the Santal belongs to the Austric family, while the Oraon and the Gond to the Dravidian family of language. The language of the Bhil is mainly Indo-European, superimposed on an Austric base. Racially, all these tribes belong to the Australoid ethnic group. Economically they are settled cultivators, though large sections of the Bhil and the Gond practise shifting cultivation. From the Southern zone, constituted roughly by the triangular tract south of the river Krishna and including Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras, Kerala and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, have been selected the Toda, the Kadar, the Andamanese and the Vedda. The Vedda, though inhabiting outside the present political hold of India, has been included among the 'Indian tribes because of the fact that the Veddid element represents the basic stratum in the physical make-up of autochthonous population of India, specially, southern India. It may also be mentioned in this connection that several south Indian tribes show legacy of Vedda culture, and the Vedda, though migrated to Ceylon afterwards, had their origin in the mainland of India. Linguistically all these tribes, except the Andamanese, may be grouped within the Dravidian family. The language of the Andamanese is still awaiting proper classification. Racially, the Vedda and the Kadar belong to the Australoid stock, the Toda to the Caucasoid and the Andamanese to the Negroid primary race From the point of economic organisation, the Toda is pastoral while the others are food-gatherers.

In arranging the tribes within this volume, we have started from the Southern zone, including the Andamans and Ceylon, and ended with the North-North-Eastern zone through the Central zone. Of course, no special importance is claimed for such an arrangement.

A uniformity has been maintained in the mode of description of the tribes which includes in each case a brief introductory note, their physical features and racial affinity, aspects of their material culture and social organisation, disposal of the dead and associated beliefs and practices, and religion.

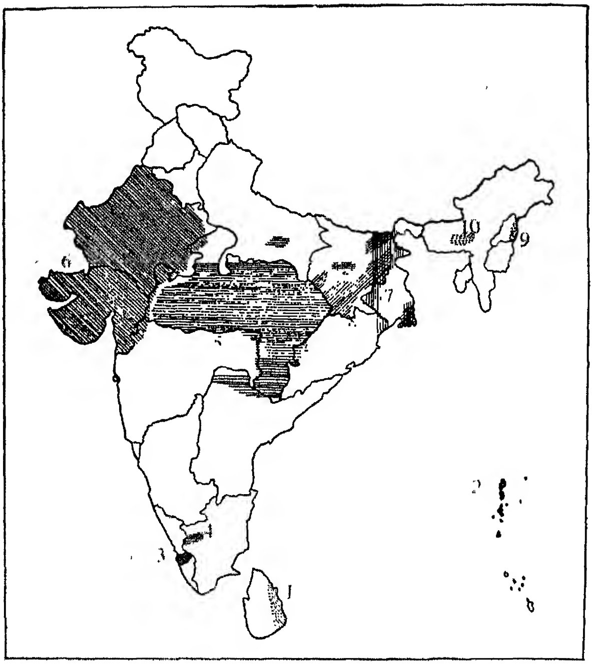
We have tried to give in a short compass a first-hand and at the same time comprehensive information of the tribal population of India for the benefit of the students of Anthropology and allied disciplines. We have however described the tribes in their traditional cultural set up avoiding complicated and controversial matters and for that too we have followed the authoritative accounts on each tribe. For the inquisitive readers a bibliography has been appended at the end of each account.

We express our deep gratitude to Saraswat Library for their co-operation in the expeditious publication of the treatise. In this connection we must take the opportunity to extend thanks to our friend Sri Amiya Kumar Bhattacharya without whose encouragement this book could never have seen the light of the day. Thanks are also due to our friend Sri Kalipada Sarkar for providing illustrations. In fine, we offer our thanks to all those who have, in some way or other, helped us in the different stages of its publication.

N. D. College, M, C.
Howrah. D. M.
14-12-71

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Sketch map of India and Ceylon showing distribution of the ten tribes.

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THE VEDDAS

INTRODUCTION : Seligman and others divided the Veddas of Ceylon into three classes : viz. Forest or wild Vedda, Village Vedda and Coast Vedda, the first retaining the purest form of the physical features and culture. The others are mixed with Ceylonese and Tamil neighbours. At the time of Seligman, the Forest Veddas were represented by a few number of families. Unfortunately, it has been reported by Spittel that none of them is surviving now. In spite of this fact, the life of the Forest Vedda is being presented here as an example of a people having a very simple economy.

Habitat

The Vedda inhabits a roughly triangular tract in Ceylon. This tract is lying between the eastern slope of the central mountain massif and the sea. Its area is about 2400 square miles. It is bounded on the west by the Mahawali Ganga. A horizontal line, from the great northward bend of this river to the eastern coast, defines the southern limit, while the eastern limit is the coast. Thus the tract includes the greater part of the Eastern Province, about a fifth of Uva and whole of Tamankaduwa, a small portion of the North Central Province. But formerly the Vedda extended over the whole island of Ceylon.

The Vedda country has a single highway—the Badulla Batticaloa Road.

The country presents every variety of scenery, met with in Ceylon, including the magnificent Uva park lands and the sandy mangrove-fringed flats of the eastern coast. In Central and Eastern Provinces the forest of great trees is found. Towards the north the great trees give place to poorer growth. In the valleys grow long grasses which attain the height of five or six feet. Clear rock-strewn streams abound. Scattered masses of rock form convenient shelters for the Veddas and assist the rapid drainage of the country. The coastal zone is flat and sandy. Saline-water marshes are common and numerous lagoons and creeks are present. The country is full of game animals. The climate in the hills is pleasant and cool, while in the lower valleys it is humid. In the rainy season the lowlands become malarious.

Physical features :

The skin-colour of the Veddas has been found to vary between deep brown-black and yellowish brown, the common colour being medium brown-black. Bronze shades occur quite often among the unmixed Veddas. Sarasins suggest that the occurrence of a skin colour of the darker shades of brown-black may be taken as evidence of miscegenation with the Tamils. The eyes are always dark brown. The hair is wavy, sometimes curly. There is little hair on body and the growth of hair on face is also scanty. There is a thin moustache and sparse goatee beard. The head is long and narrow. Sarasins give the average cephalic index of 17 skulls as 70 5, with a range between 64·9 and 75·9. The average length-height index is 73 (Range 65·4—79·0). The face is usually long but there is considerable variation in this respect. Twelve individuals gave an average facial index of 88·2 of which ten were over 85, the other two giving an index of about 77. The brow-ridges are well

marked so that the eyes appear deeply set or even sunken. The chin is somewhat pointed but not prominent. The lips are well developed but they are not swollen (except sometimes in the young). Alveolar prognathism is absent. The root of the nose is depressed. The average nasal index of seventeen skulls is 52·7 (Range 43·3—62·2), which falls within platyrrhine. (51 0—57·9) The cranial capacity of eighteen male skulls varies between 1012 and 1502 c.c., with an average of 1271 c. c. None of the three female skulls measured has a capacity less than 1150 c. c.

The stature of the Veddas is short. The average of twenty four unmixed Veddas of central district has been found to be 1553 mm. with the range between 1460 and 1600 mm. There was only one man of 1600 mm, Twenty of these were below 1575 mm. Eleven Vedda women of the same district gave an average stature of 1433 mm. (Range 1355—1500 mm.)

Although the Veddas donot become unduly fat, they often have sturdy rather than slight figures.

AFFINITY : Seligman regarded the Veddas as the island representatives of the short, long-headed pre-Dravidian jungle tribes of India. According to Dr. Osman Hill they form an intermediate stage between the Bushman of Africa and the Australian aborigines. He considers them to be the autochthons of Ceylon. The stone implements found in different parts of the island are attributed to them and some sections of them had been using these implements even when Sarasins and Seligman worked among them.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : Hunting and collection of honey and yams are the most important occupation of the

Veddas. Bow and arrow and axe are the chief weapons. The stave of bow is made of wood of *Kobbevel* (Allophylus Cobbe). String is made of the bast of *aralu* tree (Terminalia chebbula). The shaft of arrow is commonly made of the wood of the *welan* tree (Pterospermum suberifolium). The tanged arrow head of iron is obtained from the Sinhalese through barter of honey and flesh. In the dry hot months hunting is performed in the low forests around half-dried river beds. In the rainy season, rocky hills higher up form the hunting grounds. The chief game animals are deer, boar, and elk.

The Veddas collect the honey of *bambara* or rock bee (Apis Indica) in June and July. At other times of the year small combs are taken from trees. Besides the *bambara*, other varieties including the small stingless bee, supply a considerable quantity of honey. Collection of honey takes place at night. The honey combs of *bambara* are found on the precipices of rocks. These are reached by means of long cane ladders having rungs of creepers. The bees are stupefied with smoke before honey is taken. Honey is collected in *maludema*, a large vessel made of deer's hide.

FOOD : Meat forms the staple food for many months of the year. But yams and honey are considered better for their health. Raw food is usually cooked by the women. Fire was previously obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling. They are fond of chewing areca nuts. Lime is made by burning the shells of a land snail. They have betel pouch which is usually a roughly sewn bag of trade cloth or skin of monkey.

HOUSE : The Veddas live in caves and rock-shelters. They donot like to build any hut. They change their homes twice or thrice in a year according to season and available food supply. The rock-shelters or caves may

be occupied either by a single family or the entire community. In a 'communal' cave each family has a particular space within which its members remain. The limits of each family are maintained as strictly as though there were partitions dividing the floor for each family.

DRESS : Formerly the Veddas made bark cloth of the *riti* (Antiaris innoxia) of which material the Sinhalese still make rice bags. Men wear a rag of white cotton about nine inches wide, passed between their legs, and held in place by each end being passed over a waist string. The women wear coloured cotton cloth. A single width forms the length of their skirt from waist to knee and is tucked round their waists. Personal ornaments scarcely exist.

ARTS AND CRAFTS: They have but the bare beginning of a few arts and crafts. They make no pottery except where they have learnt it from the Sinhalese. Still, use of wheel for this purpose is not known. Rocks of some of the caves and the skinbag bear very rough drawing of men and animals. They are drawn by women and are said to have no religious or other special significance. They have no musical instruments but during their dances they frequently beat time with their hands on the abdomen. Myers considers that their music is simple in structure and indeed represents the very beginning of melody making. Dances play no part in the domestic life of the Veddas.

Social Organisation

CLAN : The Veddas are divided into a number of *waruge* or clans. They are : Morane, Unapane, Bandara or Rugam, Namada, Ura-wadiya, Uruwa, Kowil, Aembala and Tala. The Vedda clan is absolutely exogamous. It descends in the maternal line. There is no evidence

of any dual organisation of the clans. But there are considerable evidences to show that the clans had originally a territorial distribution. The members of the Morane and Unapane clans generally consider themselves superior to those of other clans, especially the Namada, Uruwa and Aembala who are considered to be servile clans. In old days Morane and Unapane folks never entered into matrimonial relations with any of these servile clans. As far as the origin of the different *waruge* are concerned, it has been noted that Unapane is an offshoot of Morane and the others have originated either from Morane or Unapane.

FAMILY : Each *waruge* is composed of a number of families. Each family consists of parents and unmarried children. Married daughters and their husbands are often included in a family. It is rare to find a married son with his parents.

KINSHIP : Vedda system of kinship is a form of the classificatory type. The working basis of the Vedda system is the marriage of the children of brother and sister, but not of two brothers or two sisters. A man must marry either his mother's brother's daughter, or his father's sister's daughter. Before marriage a man pays equal regard to his father and the future father-in-law. But after marriage the father-in law becomes more important and the association between father-in-law and son-in-law becomes far closer and more intimate than that between father and son. There are, however, certain matters (e.g. bringing up of a boy) in which father is more important and father-in-law takes no significant part unless the father dies.

Certain ceremonial avoidances are present among the Veddas. These are limited to members of opposite sex and practically include all the men and women

whom an individual of either sex should not marry. The most rigid avoidance lies between mother-in-law and son-in-law. A man avoids his son's wife and his brother's w.fe. A woman avoids her sister's husband. A man should not touch the daughters of his mother's sister or father's brother as well as those girls whom he calls 'sister', if they have attained puberty. He may, however, speak to them. A man does not utter the name of his mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and *vice versa*. A man also does not commonly utter the name of his son-in-law, father-in-law, brother's wife or sister's husband, the appropriate relationship terms are used instead.

MARRIAGE : The Veddas are strictly monogamons. Polyandry never existed among them. Conjugal infidelity is unknown. Marriage takes place at an early age and girls sometimes marry before puberty. It is obviously difficult to decide when prenuptial love-making between individuals, destined for each other, gives place to marriage; for such marriages are devoid of any great ceremonies. A man goes to his future father-in-law with a present of honey, yam or deer's flesh. Usually he pays more than one visit with presents of food before he receives the bride. The bride gives her spouse a waist-string of her own making which he never removes until it is worn out, when it is replaced with another made by the wife. At the time of daughter's marriage a man usually made over to his son-in-law a tract of land containing colonies of *bambara* or gave him a piece of personal property such as bow and arrow. A custom now dying out appears to be the gift of a lock of hair to the bride, when food is presented to the bride's father.

Second marriages are frequent, a man often marrying a sister of his deceased wife and a woman marrying one

of the brothers of her dead husband. Such unions are regarded as both a privilege and a duty. Anything like a formal divorce is unknown.

PROPERTY : The Veddas have a keen sense of ownership and this is equally developed with regard to the hunting land of the community and possessions of the individual. A Vedda community, consisting of one to five families, exercises the right of hunting, fishing and collecting over a particular tract of country. This right is respected by neighbours. Trespass is rare. If a game, wounded in the territory of one group, dies on the land of another, the latter is entitled to a share of the animal. The territory of each community is usually defined by natural features such as streams or hills. In the absence of such a natural feature, a mark, representing a man with drawn bow, is cut upon the trunks of trees along the boundary line.

Every Vedda has one or two dogs which are well-fed, well-treated and which he does not readily part with. The dogs are used as wedding gifts. Also a dog is annointed with a part of the offering dedicated to the spirits. The dogs are considered to be the second most valuable, the first being the bow.

The usual property of an elderly Vedda consists of one axe, bow and arrows, two or three pots, a deerskin, a "flint and steel" with supply of tinder, a gourd for carrying water, a betel pouch containing betel cutters and some form of vessel for holding lime.

INHERITANCE : Though the descent is matrilineal, inheritance to property is patrilineal and property passes from father to his children. Adult sons inherit most of their father's personal property and land is commonly given to sons

and not to sons-in-law. But certainly the sons-in-law had the right to receive something. Usually the adult children and the sons-in-law talk over and decide who should have an article of property, the whole being properly shared. In this connection we are to consider the property presented to a son-in-law at the time of daughter's marriage. It must be recorded that the landed property given at marriage to a son-in-law is counted as the daughter's share when the time comes for a man to make his final disposition.

Authority

The Veddas have no regular chieftainship but the eldest man of each community exercises considerable authority. There is no tribal consciousness among them. The local settlement or community is the most important group.

Religion

The cult of the dead forms the essential element of Vedda religion. On the death of a person the body is covered with leaves and branches and the community leaves the place and does not come back for a long time—may be ten or twelve years. None of the objects like fire, water, articles of food and drink, and any object used by the person, is left near the body.

The word *yaka* means spirit of the dead (fem. *yakani*, pl. *yaku*) and it is believed that all men on their death will become *yaka*. It is believed that spirits of the recently dead, *Nae yaku*, will continue to be friendly to their survivors, if they are well treated. Hence offerings are presented within a short time after death of an individual. Besides the *nae yaku*, there are other inportant *yaku*, chief among whom are *Kande yaka* and

his brother *Bilindi yaka.* Kande yaka is the spirit of an ancestor, a mighty hunter in his days. He is invoked for the success in hunting. Spirits of the dead go to Kande yaka and become his attendants. Immediately after death of a person, the spirit resorts to Kande yaka in order to obtain permission to accept offerings from his living relatives, and to obtain power from him to assist them in return for their offerings or to cause them injury in the event of their bad behaviour, Thus Kande yaka has become the lord of the dead. He is essentially a friendly and helpful yaka, who unlike many other yaku, is usually beneficent and never sends sickness.

The *Kiriamma,* literally 'the grand mothers', are the spirits of Vedda women. Many of them are associated with rocks and hills. Though they are said to love children, they often steal them and cause their death through sickness. Veddas gathering rock honey usually propitiate them by an offering of honey.

The worship of the yaku consists essentially of ceremonies during which shaman performs pantomimic dances aad becomes possessed by the spirit invoked. Some objects, like a ceremonial representation of arrow, are used in dances. The white juice squeezed from cocoanut forms a necessary part of the ceremonies in which Kande yaka, Bilindi yaka or the Nae yaku are invoked. Each yaka has his traditional mode of behaviour. The yaku have their methods of showing approval of the offerings. Usually they scatter some of the food, sometimes feed a favoured member of the community. He will feed a sick person or annoint him with sacred food which is supposed to cure the sickness.

After the ceremony the food offered to yaku, is eaten on the spot by all the men, women and children present.

The eating of the food is an act of communion and brings health and good fortune. The dogs are sometimes annointed with the food.

Ceremonial dances play an important part of Vedda religion. Most of these dances are pantomimic. Women never take part in the dances though they are always present and may be possessed by the spirits.

Magic does not play any role among the Veddas.

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2

THE ANDAMANESE

INTRODUCTION : The Andamanese are one of the most 'primitive' peoples of the world. They are the least mixed with other population, both physically and culturally, because of their seclusion in the islands for several thousand years. This fact is of great anthropological importance—to study a very 'primitive' people in a more or less pure form. From the late eighteenth century up to the present many travellers, missionaries and anthropologists have reported about them. The Andamaese, on whom an idea will be given presently, are virtually non-existent,—still the information of such a 'primitive' people will undoubtedly serve academic and applied interests.

Habitat

The Andamanese inhabit the Andaman Islands (between 10° 30' and 13° 30' N. Latitude and 92° 15' and 93° 10' E. Longitude) which constitutes the northern part of a chain of islands, in the Bay of Bengal, stretching from the Cape Negrais in Burma in the north, and Achin Head in Sumatra in the south. The southern portion of the chain is known as the Nicobar Islands. The Andaman group consists of 204 islands covering an area of 2508 Sq. miles, of which only four islands have more than 100 Sq. miles area.

Broadly, the islands are divided into two—the Great Andaman and the Little Andaman—separated by Duncan

Passage. The Great Andaman is further divided into north, middle and south .

The Islands are covered with series of hills and lofty forests—the hills are nowhere of great height, the highest peak being 2402 feet ; and the forest is of three kinds : (a) evergreen, (b) deciduous and (c) mangrove. There are no lakes, and only a few rivulets and streams supply fresh water to the inhabitants. The coast-line is broken by a number of creeks which are full of fishes and molluscs.

The mean annual temperature ranges from 26·1°C to 27.8°C The relative humidity is very high—average 80%. The rainfall in the islands is also very high (highest 123") caused by both the south-west and north-east monsoons.

The flora comprises of Garjan (Dipterocarpus), Black Chuglam (Myristicairya), Lalchini (Calophyllun Spectabile), Didu (Bombax Chaplasha) White Chuglam (Terminalia bialata) and mangrove. Among different animal forms, a species of pig (Sus andamanensis), a civet cat (Paradoxurus tytlerii), a few species of rats, a tree shrew, and some species of bats and dogs may be mentioned . A considereble number of snakes and lizards also worth mention.

The People : The people of the Andamans may be grouped into three categories : (a) aborigines, (b) later settlers, and (c) new settlers. Early colonizers and convicts of penal settlement constitute the 'later settler' group ; and the after-independence rehabilitated population constitute the 'new settler' group .

The aboriginal population, though similar in physical form, may broadly be divided into two groups, viz., (a)

the Great Andaman Group and (b) the Little Andaman Group.

The Great Andaman group includes the natives of the north, middle and south Andaman (with the exception of the Jarawas) and are again divided into ten different tribes ; (1) Aka-Cari, (2) Aka-Kora, (3) Aka-Jeru, (4) Aka-Bo, (5) Aka-Kede, (6) Aka-Kol, (7) Oko-Juwoi, (8) A-Pucikwar, (9) Akar-Bale, and (10) Aka-Bea.

The Little Andaman Group, on the other hand, includes the Onges of the Little Andaman, Sentinelese of the North Sentinel and the Jarawas of the South Andaman.

In common use 'Andamanese', is meant to denote the natives of the Great Andaman Group only.

In 1951 census only 23 souls of the Andamanese have been returned which shows that the aborigines are on the verge of total extinction ; of course, the figure for the forest dwellers have not been included therein.

Physical features : The Andamanese, along with the Onges, Jarawas and Sentinelese, belong to the Negrito Sub-race of the Primary race, Negroid. They exhibit the distinctive negrito characters such as, pygmy stature (less than 150 cm) and pepper-corn type of hair. Of the negrito sub-race two sub-types, Infantile and Adultiform, are recognised, and the Andamanese belong to the Infantile sub-type. The Andamanese are sub-brachycephalic (C. I. 80 or more) with a high vertical forehead and little or no brow-ridges and prominent frontal bosses. They have a short broad face a very broad nose with low, concave bridge, narrow root and flaring wings ; skin colour medium to dark drown ; almost no beard and body hair ; narrow shoulders ;

pot belly ; short legs and full lips. Steatopygic buttocks are frequently noticed in the female.

AFFINITY :

The Andamanese have affinity with the Semangs and Sakais of Malaya, Aetas of the Philippines and Tapiros of New Guinea. Though they belong to the same negrito stock, the Andamanese, as a result of complete isolation, show the characters in much purer form. Their cultural affinity with the aforesaid people may be established on the basis of certain traits, as, the bows arrows, outrigger canoe, house type, etc .

ORIGIN :

How and from where the Andamanese negrito came to these islands are still matters for speculation, on which there are number of opinions but none is absolutely convincing. Morpho logically and culturally they have affinity with the Semangs, Aetas and Tapiros but they have no similarity with the Nicobarese and the Burmese which are in their closest proximity on south and north. This is conspicuous. However, different opinions put forward by different authorities about their origin may be summarised as below ;—

(a) that they came to the islands through a land-bridge from the Lower Burma (Arakan Yoma) ;

(b) that they came from Lower Burma by sea using rafts or dug-outs helped by the northeast monsoon ;

(c) that they came from the Far East Islands of Malaya, Phillippines, New Guinea, where similar negrito people are found, helped by the southwest monsoon.

The first conjecture is not tenable when it is known that the islands got separated from the main-land (if at

all (there had been any land connection) before the arrival of the mammals—as no fossil mammal has been found in the Andamans. The second postulation is more plausible and Radcliffe-Brown also subscribes to this possibility. But the question still remains as to from where the negritos came to Burma. The third conjecrure has been discarded judging the vast distance of the Andamans from the Far East Islands, when the vehicles were rafts and dug-outs :

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : The Andamanese are a people of gathering economy and for that reason their occuption evolves around hunting, fishing, and collection of honey, molluscs, edible roots, fruits and other vegetables.

There is sharp division of labour on the basis of sex and age in the economic activity of both the forest and coast-dwellers. The young and able males go out for hunting in the forest, fishing in the sea or creek, the womenfolk get themselves busy in collecting fruits, roots, vegetables, and fire-woods and fresh water. The old folk who are in capable for out-door works, make or repair bows, arrows, nets, etc. In the seasons dull for hunting, men and women together collect fruits, vegetables and honey.

There is seasonal variation of availability of games, fishes, fruits, vegetables, honey, etc. For which the main economic activity of the people also changes from season to season. The forest dwelling people are more affected with such seasonal variation than the coastal people because the coastal folk gets the advantage of fishing in the sea more or less round the year. During rainy season hunting games—specially the wild pig—are plentiful, and the forest-dwellers concentrate mostly on

pig hunting ; while the cost-dwellers divide their time in pig hunting and fishing. During winter aud summer when it is dull for hunting and fishing, their main activity involves collection—fruits, etc. in winter and honey in summer,

WEAPONS & IMPLEMENTS : För hunting, the Andamanese depend entirely on the bow and arrow which are also used in fishing. There are different kinds of bows found in use in different parts of the Andamans.

The North Andaman bow is usually cut from a curved piece of wood . The usual length is about 160 cm to 165 cm, the breadth varying from 6 · 5 cm. to 7 · 5 cm. The mid-portion, which forms the handle, is narrow between the two broader blade-shaped portions, The blades taper to a point at each end. The bow-string is made from Anadendron fibre, and is provided with loops at both ends, In fully strung position the bow is S-shaped. The North Andaman bow is shorter, lighter and slenderly made than the South Andaman bow, and is much more elastic.

The South Andaman bow is also cut from a curved piece of wood , The length varies between 180 cm, and 210 cm . The mid-portion (i. e., handle) is narrower and thicker than the sides—the maximum breadth is about 5 . 5 cm . The exitremities are pointed . The string is made of Anadendron fibre. One end of the string is tied with a knot with the bow while at the other end a loop is formed which is served at the other end of the bow. When fully strung, the bow appears as S-shaped from the side. The South Andaman bows are always decorated with incised cross-patterns.

The Little Andaman bows are made from a straight piece of a kind of reddish-brown wood. The average

length of a bow is about 160 cm. It is broadest at the middle (average 3. 2 cm.) from where it tapers down at each end. The string is made of strips of barks of the Ficus laccifera. The string is fitted to the bow by means of loops. The Little Andaman bows are never decorated.

The Andamanese use two kinds of arrow : (a) fish arrow ; and (b) pig-arrow.

A common fish-arrow consists of three parts—a shaft made of bamboo ; a fore-shaft made of wood : and a point made of pointed iron-wire. The fore-shaft is inserted within the shaft and the point is tied with the fore-shaft by means of a thread . The fish-arrow is also used to shoot snakes, rats and rarely, birds .

A pig-arrow also consists of a shaft, a fore-shaft and a head. Both the shaft and fore-shaft are made of wood—in case of the fore-shaft the wood is tougher . One end of the fore-shaft is tightly inserted into the shaft while the other end is split to admit the head. One or two pieces of pointed iron-wire are placed below the head and are tied firmly, which constitute the barbs. In Great Andaman, pig-arrows are often made with detachable heads in which case the fore-shaft is tied with the shaft by means of cords. This kind of pig-arrow has a shaft made of bamboo.

Besides bow and arrow, the Andamanese use harpoons for capturing dugong, turtle, porpoise and large fish. A harpoon consists of a bamboo-shaft, a head made of a long piece of iron with two iron barbs attached by thread, and a rope (called, line) made of Hibiscus fibre. Harpoons are not used in the Little Andaman.

Fishing is also done by poisioning the water by means of certain plants. Small nets are used by women

for catching small fish and prawns. No fish-hook nor traps are known to them. Now-a-days, of course, hook-and-line is found in use in some cases.

Digging sticks are used for collecting roots and tubers and hooked-poles for fruits . The adze is used for collecting molluscs and honey-combs .

It may be noted here that the Andamanese have no weapons that are used only for fighting .

Among other implements of the Andamanese, mollusc shells are most important, of which again, Cyrena shell is most common . The shell is used in its natural form as knife, scraper and also as heads of pig-arrows before iron was known . Shells of whelk and pearl are also used. Before iron was plentiful in the Island adze-heads were also made of Pinna. shells. However, molluscs are very important in the life of the Andamanese —both as food and as implement ,

A. boar's tusk is used as a spokeshave, the edge is sharpened by a piece of quartz, glass or a Cyrena shell.

FIRE : Andamanese do not know how to make fire and for that reason every family preserves fire in its own fire-place ; as also some quantity of fire-wood sufficient for the day. A party when moves for hunting or changing the camp, always carries smouldering woods along with them ,

FOOD : Pig meat constitutes the principal diet of the Andamanese for the most part of the year, supplimented by fish, turtle, dugong, varietis of molluscs, certain fruits and honey.

They never take uncooked food although cooking involves simple roasting and/or boiling.

When a pig is killed it is either roasted on the spot, eviscerated and then brought to the camp ; or it may be fiist brought to the camp, roasted in the communal cooking place, and distributed among the different families. After that the individual family boils its own share in its own hearth. Boiling is made in earthen cooking pots. Roasting in the communal cooking place is done by the male members of the community while cooking for the family is done by the women of each family. Bachelors cook their own meal.

HOUSE : The economic set-up of the Andamanese has compelled them to be semi-nomadic : Brown observes that the forest-dwellers are less nomadic than the coast-dwellers because, to carry their belongings overland is a more tiresome business while the coast-dwellers have the abvantage of canoe. However, three types of camps are found among the natives of the Great Andaman—(a) the chief or permanent camp used for the most part of a year. particularly the whole rainy season ; (b) temporary camps, built up when the group is compelled to leave their permanent camp through the death of any member ; and (c) hunting camp, when a hunting party has to live for a few days away from their permanent camp.

The permanent camps are cammunal huts. The shape is generally round or elliptic—one or more central poles support the roof. The structure is built by trunks and branches of tree, thatched with palm leaves (or Nipafruticans) on cane frames. The thatching extends up to the ground. A communal hut is provided with a single doorway which is cut out in the form of inverted 'V' of the thatching mat

or, usually, automatically provided by particular technique of placing the mats.

A communal hut is inhabited by ten to fifteen families, each family having a seperate platform of its own, made of tree-branches, built at a little height from the ground and attached to the thatching at the rear end. The space below the platform is used as birth-place and room for dogs. Pieces of giant bamboo are used as pillow; bows, arrows, smoking pipes and small purses are kept in the ceiling of the thatched roof. Each family has its own fire place and a small cooking space in front of its platform. The central open space is used for communal occasions and also as dancing ground though not enough spacious for the purpose.

The coast-dwellers prefer to build a semi-permanent village as their chief camp, which is situated at a place in the forest and close to the good fishing and trutle hunting grounds. Such a village among the Akar-Bale tribe was found by Brown and described as, "The village was composed of eight huts, ranged round a central open space and all of them facing inwards towards the centre. This open space is kept clear and clean for dancing, and is simply the village dancing ground. Each of the single huts was occupied by a family group, consisting of a man and his wife with their children and dependents. One hut was occupied by an old widower and a bachelor." The huts are erected on four posts—two taller ones in front and two shorter ones at back—and a sloping roof thatched with palm-leaf mats.

Temporary camps are made in the form of a village. The huts are carelessly constructed and the thatching is done by simply tying the leaves in bundles

instead of preparing mats. Such camps are used for not more than two or three months.

The hunting camps are extremely temporary which are used only for a few days. These are simple 'lean-to's of leaves and branches.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS : The large part of utensils of daily necessity are made from different kinds of shells. The Cyrena shell is used as knife or scraper ; large Pinna shell serves the purpose of a tray or dish ; and the Nautilus shell is used as a cup or drinking vessel.

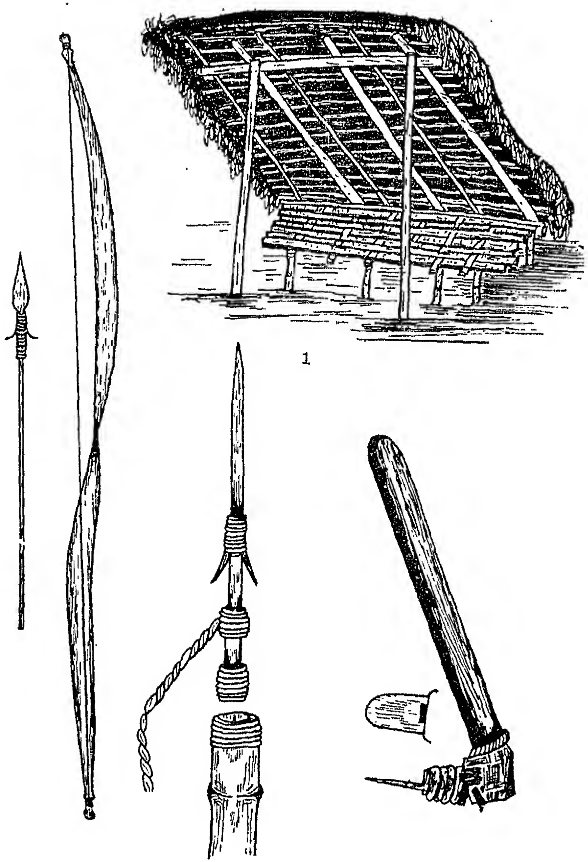
Among other utensils cooking pots, buckets and water vessels may be mentioned. The cooking pots are made of clay, dried in the sun and baked in the fire. The North Andaman pots have pointed bottom while those of the South Andaman are rounded.

The water vessels are made of bamboo and the buckets for carrying water are made of scooped-out pieces of a soft tree-trunk.

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION : The Andamanese are virtually naked. What they wear is an apology of dress. But they are very particular about ornamentation and personal decoration.

Every man wears some sort of girdle round his waist which is usually made of Hibiscus fibre. Women wear a sort of small apron made of Mimusops littoralis leaves. Every married woman always wears a belt of Pandanus leaf which is never put off without substituting a new one Often a bundle made of several Pandanus leaves is hung from the belt which are used only by married women and also by men on some ceremonial occasions.

Ornaments of wrist and knee are made of spirally



2 3 4

ANDAMANESE : 1. A lean-to type of hut
2. South Andaman bow and arrow
3. Harpoon
4. Adze.

wound leaves, Dentalium shells are attached round it and often strings are attached at the end of which small shells are suspended.

Besides, there are various types of necklaces made of shells or bones and teeth, small pieces of bamboo and mangrove seed-tops.

During their childhood every Andamanese boy and girl undergo scarification. The scars are made with a piece of quartz or glass at certain interval of time. The scarification is always done by a woman. The belief behind such scarification is either improvement of personal appearance or to let the child grow strong. The scars are made on small portion of skin and with parallel row of lines.

Besides scarification they also use some kinds of clay to paint their body. There are three kinds of clay : (a) common clay (*odu*) which is grey, yellow or pink in colour ; (b) a fine white pipe clay (*tol-odu*) which is more highly prized ; and (c) a red paint (*keyip*) which is made by a solution of burnt iron-oxide in animal or vegetable fat or oil. In the former two cases the solvent is simple water. Of these the red paint has got some restricted use—it is used to decorate a dead body for burial and on ceremonial occasions as, mourning and initiation and also during disease. The other two clays are used in connection with different ceremonies as also in their every day life—differing in patterns only.

Generally women of a group take the charge of decorating their own bodies and those of their male relatives, There are, in fact, an infinite variety of designs, though some of them are customary designs which are made to decorate a body and again, some are

special designs—applied in special ceremonial occassions. The zig-zag lines, snake pattern, etc. are to name but a few of the designs.

TRANSPORT : The forest-dwellers have no system of transport except some varieties of baskets by which they carry the cooking pots and other fragile objects. The shape and size of the baskets depend upon those of the pots to be carried. The baskets are made of different kinds of leaves, cane and bamboo-strips. The technique of making differs from place to place.

The coast-dwellers also make baskets, over and above they make different types of canoes. Three varieties of canoes are met with,—(a) the Little Andaman canoe, with one outrigger, propelled with paddles or with a pole ; (b) the Great Andaman small canoe, with one outrigger, propelled with paddles or with a pole ; and (c) the Great Andaman large canoe, without outrigger, propelled with oars.

To make a canoe a tree of soft wood is selected and fell down. Then the trunk is taken, barks removed and is hollowed out with the help of an adze. When the bow is completed the outrigger is attached. It consists of a float which is a stout pole of light wood, number of booms made of straight pieces of tough wood, and sticks of tough wood which keep the booms attached to the float. For each boom three such sticks are necessary—one vertically and the other two angularly. Where the booms pass the gunwale of the canoe they are tied with cane-strips.

Paddles used by the Andamanese are made of single piece of wood with the help of an adze and scraped with a boar's tusk. They vary considerably in size. In deep

water only paddles are used, in shallow water the canoe is manipulated with a pole.

Social Organisation :

DIVISION : The Andamanese of the Great Andaman division are divided into ten tribes, as is already mentioned. Each tribe is further sub-divided into a number of local groups. And the local groups are directly constituted of different individual families. There is no such division which may be called 'clan'. Besides local groups, on regional basis, there are coast-dwellers and forest dwellers. But these divisions have no influence on the social life of the Andamanese.

LOCAL GROUP : The local groups are the most vital divisions which control the Andamanese society, and the tribes are just loose aggregations of local groups. The tribes are practically linguistic divisions—members of a particular tribe speak a dialect which is different from that of others but the difference is not great. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Andamanese language belongs to the broad type of agglutinating language. The local groups are autonomous bodies and each has its own territory, though not always clearly defined. Feud and quarrel between two neighbouring local groups are not infrequent and to keep the relation friendly, several customs are observed—as to promote inter-marriage, adoption of children and changing one's residing camp.

FAMILY : The smallest unit is the family which is constituted of a man, his wife and their unmarried children—own or adopted. Within a family there is sharp division of labour on the basis of sex. The husband will

provide its members with chief food while the wife will make collections of fruits, tubers, roots ; or catch small fishes or molluscs ; and essentially the drinking water and fire-wood. The sons and daughters assist their parents, and the sons often continue helping parents (or foster parents) even after marriage. If a man changes his residence, he usually sends gifts to his parents.

KINSHIP : The Andamanese possess some sort of a classificatory system of kinship terminology , but it is different from all known classificatory systems The terms of address do not imply any relationship of consanguinity between the person speaking and the person addressed to. but relate to particular status and represent a class of people belonging to that status. Usually, personal pronouns are prefixed with classificatory terms to denote particular relations. However, there are certain terms which refer to particular physiological relations. It should be noted that age difference is the criterion which regulates the entire Andamanese society as is also reflected in kinship terminology.

Marriage between near relatives is strictly forbidden. A man is not permitted to marry his sister or half-sister, nor his father's or mother's sisters, nor his brother's or sister's daughter.

A married man behaves with another married man younger than himself in much the same way as he does with his younger brother. But he avoids the younger man's wife. The younger man takes the older man's wife as his elder sister and he may have certain degree of familiarity. A man maintains greater distance and respect with his parents-in-law than with his parents,

foster parents or any other person of the same age group ; and the father-in-law or mother-in-law is addressed by a term usually used to denote the grand parents (*mama-* Akar Bale). A peculiar type of avoidence exists between a man's parents and parents-in-law. From the very beginning of negotiation they start avoiding each other and continue it till death. But each party would constantly send gifts to the other.

MARRIAGE : The Andamanese are strictly monogamous. Marriage prohibition exists between near kins ; otherwise, a man may marry a girl from within his local group or outside and even from outside his own tribe. Marriage is arranged by older men and women. The negotiation between the boy's and the girl's parents is done by a third person. The matter is first talked with the young man and his parents. When both the parties agree, a date is fixed. On the appointed date the bride and the bridegroom with their parents, friends and relatives gather in the dancing ground—the bride with her party at one end and the bridegroom with his party at the other. An elderly person first addresses the bride and speaks to her loudly what she should do and what she should not in her new life ; and then to the bridegroom to the same effect. He then brings the bridegroom to the bride and makes him sit beside her. During this time the friends and relatives of both the parties weep loudly. After sometime he puts the bride's and bridegroom's hands round each others neck, and finally, the bridegroom is made to sit on the bride's lap. During these activities both the spouses show least interest about one another, and the bridegroom makes attempts to run away which is resisted by his friends. This ends the marriage performance. After this the couple enters a hut built for the purpose while the friends and relatives of both the

parties go on dancing throughout the night. At that night and few days onward the man and woman feel shy of each other.

Pre-marital sex relation, though performed in secret, is fully recognised by the society. Marriage by love is not infrequent. Extra-marital sex indulgence is very much looked down upon. Divorce is unknown. A widow may remarry, if she wishes of course, her deceased husband's brother or cousin. On the other hand, a childless widower may remarry his deceased wife's younger sister. Betrothal marriage is very rare.

PROPERTY : A land over which a local group carries on exploitation is owned by the group, and every individual has equal right of exploitation. Besides land, in all other cases private ownership is recognised. A tree suitable for making a canoe is the property of the man who first sees it and reports it to the fellow men. The canoe built of that tree is his property and others who have helped him in making the canoe bear no proprietory right over it ; but they can use it by seeking permission of the owner. A pig belongs to the man whose arrow strikes it first and remains pierced in the wound but when it is brought to the camp the meat is distributed among his family members, village elders, friends and relatives according to their respective social status, such that, the owner (young man) gets the least important portions ; but in the case of an older man, he reserves sufficient food for his family and then distributes the rest to the others. So also is the case with large fish, turtle, dugong and honey comb. The roots, fruits, seeds, fish, molluscs etc. whatever a woman collects belongs to herself. Weapons made by an individual, man or woman, are properties of himself or

herself and if anyone is to use others weapons, permission must be saught beforehand. A communal hut appears to be the property of the group, it is built by all the families jointly and the responsibility of reparing the portion occupied by each family is vested on the respective familes.

Though private ownership is recognised in every step of their daily life, the individualistic attitude can not overpower the force of social cohesion which is maintained by the respect to the old age, hospitality, generosity and good manners. Among them it is considered degrading to refuse the request of others. Besides, there is a system of constantly giving presents to the friends, relatives and older man.

PUBERTY RITE : At the time of first menstrual discharge a girl has to undergo a series of do's and donot's which ends in a ceremony after three days. These three days she lives a confined and restricted life in a separate hut made for the purpose. She can not meet any person except her parents. She is taken off all her ornaments and is only allowed to wear belts and strips of Pandanus leaf—her mat is also made of scattered Pandanus leaves. She is not allowed to lie down but can only lean against a bamboo pole. During this period the girl should abstain from taking all chief food items of the tribe, of course, not all at a time. Early every morning she is to bathe in the sea.

The ceremoney which marks the end of these restrictions and prohibitions is celebrated on the fourth day and on this occasion the girl is given a new name which is her "flower name." 'The name is that of a plant or tree which is in flower at that time.' This new name

is valid from the date of the ceremony till the birth of her first child.

In the case of a boy, due to lack of apparent physiological signal, his friends and relatives are to decide when he has grown up. Puberty ritual is performed in the Northern tribes. In this ritual several parallel scratches are made on his back by an older man with the blade of a pig-arrow. From the previous evening throughout the night the boy is required to dance and with the day-break he is made to bathe in the sea for two hours or so. Then he kneels down in an open space with bent back when the scars are made.

DEATH : When a person dies it is the women folk of the group who take the whole charge of preparing the corpse for burial. The first thing they do is 'weep loudly until they are exhausted'. Then comes the male members who also weep over the corpse. After this all the adult males of the group smear their limbs and bodies with common clay while the women get busy in decorating the dead body with bands of white and red paint, shaving the head and putting off all the ornaments worn by the dead. A band of red paint passes from ear to ear accross the upper lip. Then the dead body is flexed with knees reaching the chin and the fists resting on the cheeks with a knife or Cyrena shell in hand. Then the corpse is bundled up in a sleeping mat, tied with rope and carried by one of the men in a sling ; friends and other relatives follow the corpse. Reaching the burial ground a hole of three to four feet depth is dug with an adze and digging stick and the dead body is placed with the ropes released. The body is placed slightly on its side facing eastward. After the soil being replaced, a fire, some water and in case the deceased is a man, a bow and

some arrows are left for the corpse. There is another type of disposing the dead which involves in placing the corpse on a platform made on a tree. This type of disposal is considered more honourable.

Death is considered as the action of evil spirit. If a man or woman dies in his or her prime years, the friends and relatives of the deceased burst in anger, curse the evil spirit and shoot arrows in all directions in utter vengeance.

When a death occurs the encampment and the burial ground are marked and the camp is deserted for about three months.

The period of mourning lasts for several months in case of near rrlatives. During the period they abstain from using red paint or white clay, dancing, and certain foods. During the mourning period neither the deceased person nor the near relatives are spoken of by their names and there are some specific terms with which they are addressed. The mourners will cover whole of their body with common clay, without any decoration, throughout the period and the chief mourner should bear a plaster of the clay on his or her forehead (in case of a widow, the whole head).

On termination of the mourning period the bones of the deceased are dug up, washed in the sea or creek and then weeped over those—first by the men and then by the women. The skull and the jaw bone are then decorated with red paint and worn around the neck of the chief mourners with the help of a rope. On that the mourners decorate themselves with red paint and white clay and the mourning is terminated with a ceremonial dance in which all the mourners take part.

RELIGION : The religious beliefs of the Andamanese are based on simple animistic concepts. Their idea of soul arises from reflections and not from shadows. An individual believes that his reflection is his spirit which goes after death to another world (*Chai tan*) under the earth where it leads a similar life. They believe in the transmigrationof the spirits into other creatures and that every child conceived has had a previous existence.

They believe in different class of spsrits—spirits of the jungle, spirits of the sea, spirits of disease and spirits of storm. It is believed that all illness and deaths resulting from sickness are caused by the spirits. Spirits wander about at night and person strolling alone at night is liable to the attack of evil spirits. Whistling at night invites spirit while singing, fire, bees-wax, human bones, arrows and red paint keep the spirits away.

Andamanese personify all natural phenomena. Thus the sun is the wife of the moon and all the stars are their children ; the two monsoons, northeast and southwest, are attributed to the two spirits *Biliku* (or *Puluga*) and *Tarai* (or *Deria*), respectively. The strom. rain, thunder and lightning caused by a particular wind (northeast or southwest)) are believed to be the expressions of anger of the respective sprits (*Biliku* or *Tarai*). Lightning is believed to be the firebrand of the *Biliku* or *Tarai*, thrown occross the sky. There are certain activities which are disliked by *Biliku* and *Tarai*, such as burning or melting of bees'-wax, killing cicada, burning a type of explosive leaf (*Mimusops littoralis*), which if performed in normal weather would cause the anger of *Biliku* or *Tarai* and invite storms ; but if performed during heavy storm—these will help stopping the storm.

There are, in the Andamanese society, certain persons (*oko-jumu*) who possess spirits or supernatural powers. These persons are given a special position in the society and they can be indentified with the shamans, medicine men, magicians, of other primitive societies. An *oko-jumu* may acquire spirits in three different ways, (1) by death: (2) by direct communication with the spirits in the jungle and (3) through dreams. An *oko-jumu* is believed to have the power to cure or cause all sorts of diseases ; and also he can control the spirits that cause storms and inclement weather.

Andamanese' idea about the earth is that it is flat and disc-like supported by an immense palm tree. Earthquakes are belived to be the sports of the ancestors.

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3

THE KADAR

INTRODUCTION : The word 'kadar' is the plural form of Kadan ('forest dweller') derived from Kadu which means forest in Tamil. The plainsmen designate this tribe only by this term, other forest dewlling tribes being known by different names. In anthropological literature the tribe is known as Kadar or Kadir.

Habitat :

The Kadar inhabit a small area in Kerala State, mainly in Coimbatore and Cochin districts.) The territory lies just on the edge of the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats and at an altitude of roughly 2000ft. above sea level. It is between 10° 15′ and 10° 30′ north latitudes and 76° 15′ and 77° east longitudes. The area is infested with primeval tropical forest which are rich in timber.

The hilly southern part of the Western Ghats is full of giant trees and bamboo thickets. Numerous streams carry water throughout the year. The rainy season, due to South West monsoons, is heavy and is from the end of may or beginning of June up to August or September. During this period iife in the forest becomes precarious for man. Even the comparatively dry parts of the forest are transformed into thick jungles almost impassable without the help of jungle knife. A lesser extent of rain is brought by the North East monsoons.

The weather is dry from the end of November to the following May. Occasional showers and rain-storms, however, occur. The tempeature sometimes rises to 100°C during the day but the shades of dark groves make one comfortable. The nights are amazingly cool. The fauna of the region include elephant, tiger, bison and bear.

The territory of the Kadar is rather inaccessible from the east. Now motor transport runs mainly to carry timber but it does not penetrate into the heart of territory along the bank of Chalkudi river. Formerly there was but little traffic between the arid plains of the eastern Tamil country and the steep slopes of the Western Ghats. The dread of Malaria, wild animals and black magic dominated the way of life in these mountains until about the beginning of the 20th century. At the beginning of this century the forest administration of Cochin opened a narrowgauge tramline for timber transportation. It has extended to the heart of the Kadar territory at the foot of the Karimalai Hill, where the forest station Kuriarkutti has been erected.

The population of the Kadar is small, 565 according to the census of 1941. On the neighbourhood of the Kadar live the tribes Muthuvan, Mannar, Paliyan and Mala-Arayan. They have friendly attitude towards these tribes but inter-marriage or other social contact with any of them is not found. The Kadar speak a corrupt form of Tamil with Malayalam elements. The language indicates a former language of their own which has not been preserved.

Physical features : Skin-colur varies between clear brown and dark brown, the common colour being dark reddish brown. Hair form is generally smooth though

adult male shows broad wavy hair in the highest frequency. Frizzly hair is met with in a few cases (2.14%) but when familial relations are excluded its frequency becomes only 0.7%. The predominant texture and colour of hair are respectively coarse and black. The colour of eye is predominantly deep darkbrown. Epicanthic fold is absent and the axes of eyes are straight. Lips are medium in thickness. A few men have Negroid type of paddy lips. Alveolar prognathism is slight. Beard and body hair are scanty.

Stature of men varies between 1435 and 1686 mm; while that of women between 1307 and 1553 mm. The respective means are 1557.5 and 1435 mm. In both the sexes short stature predominates. Head-form is predominantly dolichocephalic, the mean cephalic index of male being 74.23 and that of female 73.26. Hypsicephaly and acrocephaly are met with in the highest frequencies in both the sexes. Mean length-height and breadth-height indices for male are respectively 64.90 and 87.71. Face is generally medium (av. F.I.=87.71), though long faces occur in substantial numbers. Nose is usually mesorrhine (av. N. I.=83.19) though chamaerrhine nose are found in considerably high frequencies in both the sexes. Nasion depression is shallow in majority of the cases but it is deep in one-fourth. Nasal bridge is predominantly concave.

The Kadar show the highest frequency of blood group O (r=0.632). The frequency of B is greater than that of A (q=0.255, q=0.124). In respect of Palmar Mainline Formula they show the highest frequency of 7.5.5. In the case of finger-prints the male shows 59.38% Whorl and 40.10% Loops while for female the respective figures are 47.72 and 51.77.

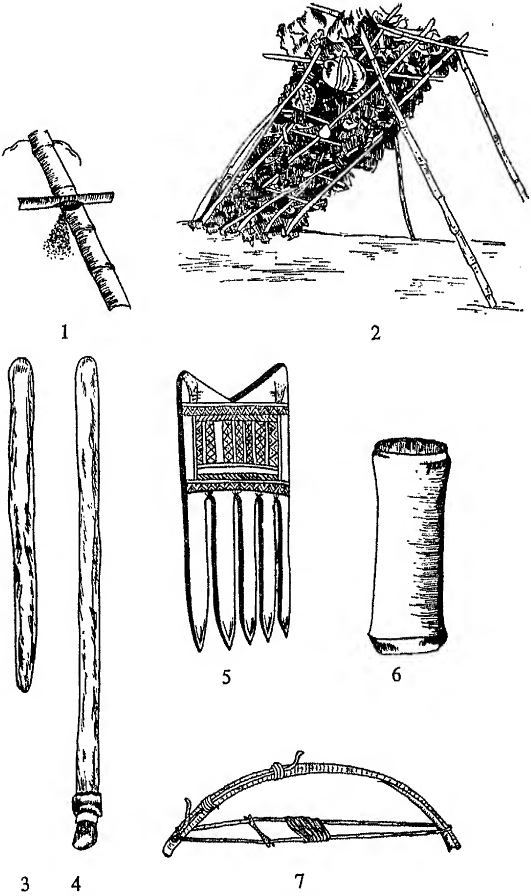
AFFINITY :

It is evident from the analyses of the anthropometric and dermatoglyphic data that the Kadar belong to the same Veddid or Australoid stock, like the Paniyan, the Kannikar and others. Some basic similarities have been found with the Semang of Malaya Peninsula. But it has been rightly pointed out by Schebesta that the Semangs are highly intermixed with an Australoid element. As such the similarity between the Kadar and Semang appears to be due to this common Australoid element. Banerjee has shown a basic similarity between the Kadar and the Australian aborigines in hair form and thus solved the much drawn controversies on alleged negrito affinity of the Kadar. He has also pointed out that the Kadar hair differs significantly from the Negrito hair both in the morphological and the histological aspects. Chakravarti has also supported his view of Australoid affinity through the study of dermatoglyphics and showed that the similarities of dermatoglyphic criteria among the Kadar, Semang, Aeta, Papuan and the Pygmies of New Guinea are probably due to the basic Australoid element in all of them.

According to Sarkar the presence of frizzly hair among the Kadar is due to a recent Negro, not Negrito, intermixture. It is also obvious from the Negroid physical features met with among a few individuals.

Material Culture :

The Kadar are basically food collectors even now. Ehrenfel did not find agriculture of any kind among them. Collection of jungle products is still their main source of livelihood, though a few individuals are employed in coolie-work. Some of the collected



KADAR : 1. Bamboo fire-saw. 2. Wind screen. 3. Simple digging stick. 4. Digging stick with iron working end. 5. Bamboo comb. 6. Bamboo vessel. 7. Pellet bow.

materials are exchanged for rice, chillies, opium, arrack and clothes. They usually collect roots, tubers, and honey, sometimes they hunt for small games, and go on fishing.

Digging stick is the principal tool for digging out roots and tubers. Three types of digging sticks are found : simple, stone-headed and iron-headed. The iron-headed ones are however frequently used now-a-days. It is six or seven feet in length and about three inches in width. It is fitted with a trapezoid piece of iron, the narrower end of which is stuck into the stick and fixed by means of an iron ring. The broader end is sharpened to serve as the working edge. The iron-fitted digging stick is called *para kole.* Sometimes stone-edges are used in place of iron. The simple digging stick, or that without any iron or stone head, is called *kooran kole.*

Honey collecting expedition mostly takes place in dry season between March and May. The actual collection is carried out during a dark night especially if there are first night showers previous to approaching monsoons. These help the honey hunters since rain makes the bees drowsy. In case of a place far away from home, a whole group of men, women and children often spend a night or two in a temporary leaf shelter near the tree or rock concerned. Several days before the operation begins, wooden pegs are driven into the massive trunk of the tree. Bamboo poles are then tied to these pegs with fibre, so that climbing up and down the tree becomes possible, in spite of the fact that the trunk may be branchless upto a hundred feet from the ground. The task of climbing on these single bamboo-poles is not easy. Serious hurts, fracture of limbs and death may occur in these operations.

When a climber reaches near the spot of the honey-comb, he smokes out the bees with torches. The comb is

then cut and its contents are filled in tin boxes. Foimely bomboo containers were used in place of tin.

Collection of honey from the rocks is done in almost the same way. Wooden pegs and bomboo-poles are not used in this case. A man climbs down a precipitous rock while one or more hold a rope for safety. The man returns, after collecting honey, with the help of the rope. The person holding the rope on which the honey collector descends and climbs is often a close relative to the collector's wife. The reason behind this arrangement is that if he let the rope slip, he will be resposible for looking after the collector's widow. There is however no fixed rule regarding the relationship.

FISHING: In fishing expeditions ten to twenty persons of both sexes and all ages participate. Low embankments are made in a stream with bamboo, mud and leafy branches. The water is then poisoned with the bark of a poisonous tree. Fish is also killed with bamboo sticks and jungle knife. Children are clever enough to catch fish with their hands, especially in enlarged ponds, enclosed by artificial dams.

HUNTING: The Kadar sometimes hunt deer and other small game animals with the assistance of dogs. These trained dogs chase the animals down to the bank of a river when it is compelled to jump in the water for an escape. In that case the animal is easily killed by the hunter with his jungle-knife or a heavy digging stick.

FOOD: Roasted boiled roots were previously the staple food of the Kadar. These are often mixed with roasted fish, crab or meat. Now-a-days boiled rice is

being accepted by many as their staple food in spite of the fact that most of these roots make a delicious meal and is better than rice and curry in taste. Arrack and tea have been introduced by the contractors and has become the favourite drinks now-a-days. Opium has also been introduced to which they are much addicted.

Bison is tabooed to the Kadar and this prohibition has been extended to ordinary buffalo. They do not eat tiger, elephant or bear out of respect to these animals. The small *Vela Kurangu* or white monkey (*Macaca radiata*) is not eaten due to its man-like appearance. But black-monkey, *Kari Kurangu*, is a delicacy to them.

At present earthenware pots, imported from the plains, are used for boiling food materials. The old method of boiling can still be seen on the occasion of honey-collection and other expeditions. A piece of bamboo containing two or three nodes is selected so that there is an open chamber at one end. The other end is stuck into the ground. The food to be boiled is placed in the uppermost chamber which projects above the ground, The vessel is then covered with a thin layer of mud. A strong fire is heaped round it, and is kept burning until the food is boiled. In case the first partition wall breaks the others keep the food from falling through.

Domestic Animals :

Each family possesses one or more dogs. The Kadar seldom enter forest without a dog. The dogs are well-fed and are trained so that they bark on real dangers only. Cattle and fowls have been introduced recently.

HOUSE : The original house of the Kadar consists of wind screens or leaf-shelters. This type of house still

persists. But now-a-days they live in rectangular gabled house of split-bamboo walls and *oda* leaf roof. The villages are usually situated on a hillock near a stream or a spring. The huts are frequently arranged in ring and surround an open village space. This space is more or less levelled and kept free from vegetation. In case of large villages the houses may be arrange in double irregular rings. In a settlement three to twelve houses are usually found. The huts are neither kept in line nor oriented to any particular direction. One or two menstruation huts and a cow-shed (where cows are introduced) are situated 25 to 40 ft. away from the orbit of the ordinary dwelling houses. The villages have no definite boundary lines.

A house has a roughly rectangular ground plan, about 7 to 12 ft in length. It is built on a platform of beaten-earth, raised about a foot above the ground. Four wooden poles of about 5 ft. are firmly planted in four corners of the platform to support the walls and the main wooden or bamboo rafter of the roof. Thinner poles are planted in between the corner poles for additional support.

The roof is usually two sloped with a ridge pole of 5 to $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. above the ground. Sometimes a single slanting plane constitutes the roof. The roof is covered with *oda* leaves which keep the houses cool and protect it from rain. Repair is very often neglected and rain leaks through freely. The roof protrudes to form a small veranda. Sometimes a small porch under the same roof is found at an entrance. Partition walls are sometimes set up when two distinct families dwell in one house. Such partition walls are lower than an average individual and the inmates can look over these without difficulty and conversation goes on from one part of the house to the other.

There are two small platforms built inside the house to serve as sleeping and fire places. Fire place proper is

an oval hole, cut out from the platform, round which 3 or 4 stones are placed to support the cooking vessel. The fire-place is usually situated in a corner near the entrance of the room while the sleeping place to the opposite wall. The fire is kept burning throughout the night to check the entry of wild animals.

There are usually two entrances to a house, especially when there are two distinct families. The rooms have no window. They are however not very dark as light passes through the split-bamboo walls and the open space between the protruding roof and walls. There is no furniture excepting occasional sitting boards of wood. Bamboo bars are suspended horizontally to hang clothes, baststrings and vessels of water or honey. The house is not decorated. Both sexes co-operate in the construction of a house.

FIRE MAKING : Fire-saw was the genuine device for producing fire and it is still used at occasions. The fire saw consists of a vaulted, half-bamboo into which a slit is cut parallel to its breadth. Along this a sharp-edged piece of dry wood is moved rapidly in sawing fashion. The tinder under the half-inclined piece of bamboo begins to smoulder soon after the first glowing sparks fall through the slit A fire is then quickly produced by gently blowing on the smouldering tinder.

Now-a-days 'flint and steel' is the usual device for fire-making where safety matches have not yet entered.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS : Now-a-days the Kadar wear mill-made clothes imported from the plains. Formely their dress consisted of a skirt made of bast, fibre or bark with additional leaf-garments. This kind of dress was well suited to the climate of

Kader country and to their open air occupation. The women keep the upper part of their bodies usually free when no foreigners are present among them.

Brass and other cheap metal ornaments have been recently introduced among them. Previously bamboo-combs were used as ornaments. These, however, still form an important ornament of the women. Two types of combs are present ; the *chipu* which is about $4''$ in length and $1''$ in width and is provided with five or more teeth ; the other one is *chagar* which is $8''$ in length and $1\frac{1}{2}''$ in width and provided with fewer and larger teeth. Both the types are adorned with bands of short lineal cuts which form a sort of geometrical trellis pattern.

Music and dance play important role in ceremonies of the Kadar. Music is mainly performed by beating drums and piping. Dances are always accompanied by music. Dances are, however, rarely performed now-a-days.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION

FAMILY : The tribe is divided into a number of communities which usually occupy separate villages. The whole community, however, does not take part in a food gathering expedition. It is usually the members of a family that take part. The Kadar have no clan and no other unilineal decent group. Family is the social unit. The family house has a name e. g., *Kochukura, Vettioren*. The general character of the family organisation may be best termed as bilateral. The members of a family have both patrilineal and matrilineal connections. Family ties are based on strong emotional and practical values. Greatest importance is attached to parent-child relation.

KINSHIP : Classificatory types of kinship terms have been noticed. The mother's brother holds an influential

position. In case of a man's father's death, the mother's brother would come in as an important guardian. It is he who feels that he is more responsible than any other close relatives, for helping his sister's children.

MARRIAGE : Formerly adult marriage was the rule. But contact with the Hindu neighbours has changed it to a child marriage. The Kadar are usually monogamous in the sense that every person has only one wife at a time. Divorce and remarriage of both partners are frequent. Instances of polygyny and polyandry have been noticed. Polyandry of non-fraternal type has been recorded but that of fraternal type has not been recorded by Ehrenfels.

Cross-cousin marriage is prevalent among the Kadar and preference is given to one's paternal cousin. Marriage with one's mother's brother's daughter is however not prohibited. Marriage also takes place between a man and his father's brother's daughter. As a whole the frequency of paternal cousin marriage is greater than that of maternal cousin marriage. The statement in older literatures, that "the custom prevails among them of a man's marrying the daughter of his maternal uncle" and that "a man may not marry a girl related to him on the male side", are, according to Ehrenfels, due to misleading terms *maman* and *amay*. Among the Kadar *maman* signifies father-in-law irrespective of his being maternal or other uncle. and father's sister is called *amay*. But in the plains the former term means mother's brother and the latter mother's brother's wife. Thus when a Kadar would say that his wife is the daughter of his *maman* and his *amay*, he simply states that the girl is the daughter of his father-in-law and also of his maternal aunt. But to a Nayar the same statement would indicate the girl to be the daughter of his maternal uncle and his wife,

Matrimonial relationship with one's wife's sisters occurs though it is not encouraged. Extramarital sex-relations are not frequent. More or less permanent sex-relations of Kadar woman with men from the plains are considered legal marriages by the Kadar The sexual life of the Kadar is regulated by a sort of a taboo which bans any sexual-activity inside a home.

The marriage ceremony is celebrated with the usual meal or feast offered to relatives and neighbours. It is accompanied by music, dance and arrack drinking, Betel and arecanuts were previously exchanged between the parties. Second or third marriages are not celebrated with ceremonies. After marriage the bride comes to live in the house of the bridegroom's father but there are cases where the bridegroom goes to live in bride's family.

DIVORCE : Formal divorce is not met with, a woman simply runs away. It is a valid divorce if a woman or a man leaves the partner with the admitted intention of divorce.

PROPERTY : The usual property of a Kadar consists of digging stick, jungle knife, bamboo mat, bamboo vessel, 'flint and steel', bamboo comb, clothes and ornaments. Double ownership is noticed, some of the articles being owned by husband and some by wife.

INHERITANCE : Due to lack of any well defined ownership to property there are no codified laws of inheritance among the Kadar. But younger ones and near relatives feel that they have a claim on the personal belongings of their parents and mother's brothers.

Tools, accumulated jungle products and cash money are distributed among the children and the sister's children, who lived with the person at and before the time of death. An unmarried sister is often given a share. A

certain preference to relatives in economically weaker position is generally acknowledged.

The question of inheritance to immovable property does not arise as there is no private ownership to land. The inmates of a house continue to live uninterrupted at the death of even the most prominent and senior member.

DESCENT AND SUCCESSION : The name of a Kadar does not indicate to either one's parents, or to any locality where one is born. There is also no definite rule regarding the transmission of the family-name. Sometimes it passes through male line sometimes through female line. The post of village headman (*mooppan*) is succeeded by one's sister's son.

EVIDENCE FOR MATRILINY : Thus some of the elements of Kadar society point to a matrilineal nature. The important position of mother's brother, preference to paternal cousin marriage, occasional matrilocal residence, succession to *mooppan's* post by sister's son, some matrilineal connections among the members of a family, and a few other evidence may be cited in support of this view.

MENSTRUATION POLLUTION ; Menstruation pollution is rigidly observed and during their monthly periods the girls have to stay in separate huts or leaf-shelters, These menstruation huts (*thindachala*) also serve as their kitchen where the girls prepare food, the raw materials being brought by sister, mother or girl friends. Woman under the pollution is strictly prohibited from going to the common dwelling place. Breaking of this prohibition may cause disease and vident death and for this reason the taboo is still sincerely observed.

When the menstrual bleeding ceases the girl takes a good bath, if possible in a river, after which she would mix turmeric with water and carry it to the village. She would sprinkle this water on huts and inmates in the immediate neighbourhood of her house. This ceremony makes the termination of the monthly pollution.

PUBERTY RITES : In case of the first menstruation, a small ceremony is performed which consists of drum-beating, piping, dancing and drinking. A feast is generally given to the relatives and neighbours at the termination of the seclusion of the girl. This feast, *thirandu Kalyanam*, may be the survival of a real puberty or initiation rite for girls.

There is however another custom which seems to indicate more clearly that there had been true initiation ceremonies for both the sexes. This is the *palliktһu Kalyanam*, 'tooth-cutting festival'. It consists in the chipping of the incisor teeth by a chisel until they take the shape of pointed triangles. The operation is done by an elderly person, well experienced in this matter. This ceremony used to be done for a girl at the time of her first menstruation-ceremony and for a boy at a date before his marriage for the first time. Although this ceremony is no more practised, but some features of this custom can still be traced.

DEATH AND FUNEREL : After a death, the body is not usually buried at once but kept for a few days in the house. During this period and seven days following the burial, a portion of the daily food of the inmates is placed in a three-stringed suspended vessel-holder, for the soul of the dead. This food will be consumed by the elderly members of the family, after it has been kept for sometime in the container.

On the day of the burial, near relatives and immediate neighbours are given a moderate feast accompanied by ordinary music. Afterwards the party accompanies the dead body to its resting place. The body is washed and carried on either a bier made of bamboo, or in sarcophag constructed from stems of banana plant. The grave is dug at some suitable place in the jungle where digging is not very difficult. The body is placed in the grave with its head pointing towards the south. A number of articles are buried along with the body. Among these there will invariably be a digging stick, an earthenwere pot, a cocoanut spoon. In the case of a woman, the ornaments worn in her life-time, will be left on the body while in that of a man his hungle-knife added. In the case of a child, the mother sprinkles a little milk from her breast in the direction of the grave. The graves are not visited, rather avoided.

There exists a second funeral ceremony which is more in the form of a memorial feast. It is celebrated with as much pomp as possible. Sometimes big parties assemble. A pandal is erected for this ceremony. After this second ceremony the soul of the deceased can leave the orbit of his former daily life and goes high up into the air. In this ceremony large quantities of each item of food are placed in the pandal in neat heaps and big pots from each variety, a portion is set spart which will be distributed to the old men and women by the oldest male member of the party. After this a general feast is celebrated with drum-beating, dance etc.

LIFE AFTER DEATH : It is believed that the life of the deceased continues to be conscious and stay or sometimes in heaven. Afterwards it is reborn in another body. This body may be of an animal or that of a human being.

RELIGION : A semi-religious awe is attached to the megalithic monuments in the hills of the Kadar. No explanation is however given regarding the existence of these huge stones. Omens and prediction do not appear to play any important part. It is considerd inauspicious to meet a bison or to hear a kind of night bird, known to them as *Kalankozhi* (lit. death-chicken)

Divination is also practically absent. An oracle, regaıding the sex of a future baby is however, present. There is a stone called *pillaikall* or child's rock, Pregnant women occasionally visit the place and standing on another smaller rock, east of *pillaikall,* throw pebbles towards it w.th their feet. If the pebble hits the stone and falls towards the west, a boy is going to be born while in case of its not hitting *pillaikall* and falling towards other directions, the child will be a girl.

Sacrifice of animals is absent except that of fowl at the recently introduced *Kalipuja* A few drops of honey are sprinkled on the ground when the season's first honey-comb is collected and honey is tasted for the first time in the season. This sprinkling is considered as a sacrificc to some hill gods.

The general Hindu type of worship dominates the religion of the Kadar, The main deities are *Kali*, *Aiyappan* and *Maruthi*. Kali protects them from disease and attacks of elephants, Aiyappan is the lord over tiger and panther, and protects aginst these. Maruthi protects them from harms inflicted by black magic and witchcraft.

The second group of invisible things is connected with the worship of the gods and goddesses in the ordinary Hindu practice of the plains. A host of tree, water and similar 'Nature Spirits' is recognised. These have neither proper names. nor particular seats, nor any particular worship. It is noteworthy that in the pandals, erected

at festivals for departed souls, small bamboo-swings are made for use of these sprits.

A third group of religiously respected figures are the divine *Malavay* and *Malankuratti* (lit. one from hills and female one from hills). To the Kadar the divine couple represents both a tribal deity as creator of first Kadar man and woman, and also the creator of the world. The religious worship of the Kadar is un-iconic, for there are no particular priests, temples, dates, months or seasons where or when the divine couple should be approached in prayer. Prayers are directed to them but no formula, no ritual and no conventionalised body positions are pescribed or observed.

MYTHOLOGY : The Kadar have a myth of the Golden Age when jungles were full of fruit-trees and edible animals, especially black-monkeys. In those days not even the digging sticks were required. It was the foolish digging of unneccssary holes by which little boys and girls brought disgrace and with it the burden of digging stick fell on the tribe. This legend clearly depicts how stone and iron were successively adopted for strengthening the head of a digging stick.

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4

THE TODAS

INTRODUCTION : The Todas. a tribe inhabiting the Nilgiris of South India, have become a subject of interest since the early seventeenth century when they were first visited by a Portuguese Missionary in 1602. They are a people of pastoral economy and polyandrous marriage system. They stand distinct in appearance from all other neighbouring people. During the late 19th. & early 20th. century scientists like Marshall, Thurston, Rivers and many others have worked among them. During 1960 a special survey among the Todas has been made, conducted by the Goverment of India. A brief account of the people is given in the following pages.

HABITAT : The Nilgiris lie between 76°27′ and 77°41′ East Longitude and between 11°8′ and 11°37′ North Latitude forming the nucleus of the Eastern and Western Ghats and provide every variety of natural scenery. It is an undulating plateau of about 478 sq. miles area, 3,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. This altitude of the Nilgiris has greatly modified the tropical climate of South India. The average annual temperature varies between 4.4°c to 23.9°c and the average annual rainfall is 192.09 cm.

The Nilgiris possess a great variety of forest resources and abundant wild animals. Of the forest trees and plants mention may be made to white cedar, Satinwood, Rose wood, Iron wood, Ebony, Silver oak, Eucaliptus,

Acacia, and Orchids and among the wild animals there are—elephant, tiger, leopard, sambhur, varieties of deer, antelope, bison, pig, Nilgiri ibex and wild dog.

THE PEOPLE : At present there are, in all, 762 Todas, of which 150 have been converted to Christianity. Among the non-converted Todas the propotion of male and female is 322 and 290 respectively, the sex, ratio being 901. In age-group-wise distribution, the males dominate over females in the age-groups 33 and above ; whereas below that (i-e. from O to 32) there is female dominance. This fact is contradictory to the general trend of any other population. It is probable that, venereal disease which is very common among them, pre-puberty sex-intercourse and excessive sex-indulgence due to polyandrous system of marriage, affect the general health of the women folk and lower down their viability at later ages.

PHYSICAL FEATURES : In physical features the Todas are, in a way, misfit to the neighbouring dark skinned Dravidian population. They are light-skinned, —the men rich brown and the women still lighter. They are tall—average male height is 1675 mm. and that of female—1525 mm. They are dolichocephalic (C. I. 73 to 74) with a high, narrow to medium nose (N. I. 75). long oval face, brown eyes and moderately full lips. They possess thick, black and wavy hair with profuse beard and body hair. In blood-group they are high in B (38 0 ; q=0.278) and moderately high in 0 (29.5 ; r=0.545) ; the distribution of A and AB are 19.5% (p=0 157) and 13 0 per cent respectively. The male bears an atheletic and robust physique ; while the female is quite pretty at young age but become old and wrinkled by their thirtieth year.

AFFINITY : The racial position of the Todas is very much debatable. They constitute a composite

population. Physically, their affinity cannot clearly be traced with any other population ; although Eickstedt grouped them within the "North Indid" to which also belong the peoples of the Punjab, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Rajputana. But Dr. Aiyappan thinks that they are proto-Mediterranean with very little admixture with the proto-Australoid strain of the Indian population. Linguistically, they are more akin to the Tamil speaking peoples ; and culturally, certain similarities may be traced with the Nairs and other peoples of the Malabar. On the whole, it seems that the Todas represent a segment of the South Indian population—the dissimilarities may be explained as results of their long isolation in the Nilgiri hills.

ORIGIN : The present day Todas do not claim nor do they preserve any tradition about the megalithic stone-circles found in the region. But from some religious and ceremonial rites, encircling of the dairies with stone blocks and from the fact that the most sacred and ancient dairies are circular in structure with conical roof, Dr. Rivers conjectures that one of the two main divisions (Teivalid) arrived at the tract earlir than the other (Tartharol) who practised megalithic burial.

He also advocates a Malayalam relation on the basis of certain points of similarity in social and religions customs ; and on the basis of the disposition of the Toda munds (villages) which indicates that they have come from the west.

Prince Peter of Greece proposes a Sumerian origin of Todas judging the similarity in the names of eleven Sumerian and Toda deities.

Todas themselves believe that they and their buffaloes have been created by one who himself was a dairyman and now lives in and rules the Amnodr, the world of

the dead. They are also inclined to believe that they are the descendants of the Pandavas.

LANGUAGE : The Todas speak a dialect which is very much akin to the Tamil. They do not possess any script. They frequently use secret words in presence of strangers and in their ceremonial occasions. They are able to count into thousands.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : The Todas are a pastoral people —they subsist on the products of their buffaloes ; and hence, major portion of their time and labour are engaged in the activities related to dairy operations. Formerly, they did not practise agriculture or any art and craft. Now-a-days however, they practise little cultivation of potato and certain cereals.

Men are very active and do almost every major work including herding, milking, churning, gathering of fuel, building and trading : while women fetch drinking water, pound the grains, mend or embroider the clothes, clean the house and do such other minor works. Formerly, cooking was also a male business, but at present, women perform it. Women are strictly prohibited to enter the dairies not to speak of performing any dairy operation.

THE LIVESTOCK ANIMAL : Each household, on average, possesses eight to twelve buffaloes. These are a fine variety of the common water buffalo of India. The cows are given individual names and their pedigrees in the female line only are remembered. The bulls are generally unnamed. The Todas distinguish two classes of the buffaloes—sacred and ordinary. Of course, of the sacred buffaloes, again there are different degrees of sanctity. The ordinary buffaloes

are tended by the boys and ordinary men of the village and their milk is churned in the dwelling house. But the sacred buffaloes are tended by special dairymen and the milk is churned in sacred dairies along with definite rituals.

FOOD : The Todas are vegetarians, their staple diet comprises of dairy and vegetable products. Except on ceremonial occasions, which occur three to four times a year on which buffalo-calves are sacrificed, they never take meat. The dairy products include milk, whey, butter and ghee. Dishes are prepared by rice boiled in milk, rice and jaggery boiled in water, vegetable curry or whey vegetable broth.

Now-a-days they also purchase wheat, Dhall and other cereals from the market. Among the beverages, they take chiefly tea and coffee. Both male and female are addicted to liquors, specially, methylated spirit purchased from the market. But they have no system of their own of preparing fermented liquor. Both men and women use tobacco in the form of snuff, usually rubbed on the gums.

FIRE : The traditional system of fire making is by a simple fire-drill although now-a-days they use match-sticks, Fire-drills are used at the time of lighting funeral pyre.

HOUSE : A typical Toda dwelling hut is semi-barrel in shape—the barrel being split longitudinally. It consists of a single room of 15′×12′ in area. The roof and the side walls form one continuous curve made of split bamboo, rattan and thatch and they project some distance beyond the front and back walls which are strongly built with rough wooden planks. The back wall is solid while the front one is provided with an entrance of two to three feet in height through which the inhabitants

have to crawl to enter. Inside the hut there is a central hole on the floor which is used for pounding grains, a fire place at the rear corner and raised platforms of mud used as sleeping places and for keeping household utensils. Save and except the small entrance the huts are usually devoid of any window or ventilator. In the front portion of a hut men carry out dairy operations.

In every *mund* or village there is a dairy which is similar in structure to that of a residential hut. There is an inner partition which divides the hut into two portions—in the outer portion there is a fire-place and two beds where the dairyman lives and receives his friends, and in the inner portion he carries out dairy operations. The ancient and sacred dairies are circular in structure with a conical roof and are surrounded by a stone wall.

One to six residential huts with their buffalo-pen and a dairy constitute a Toda village or *mund.* Buffalo-pens are circular areas with a fencing of stone blocks providing a single entrance for the buffaloes.

DRESS : Both male and female Toda wear a long, loose, white mantle of coarse cotton (*Poothukuli*) thrown over the shoulders along with a waist cloth. The mantle bears coloured bars, generally, red, blue or black at the skirts which are supplemented by embroidery. The men also wear a perinneal band supported by a string around the waist.

Shirts and blouses are gaining popularity but those are not allowed in sacred or religious occasions.

Usually they do not use any head-gear or foot-wear.

HAIR STYLE : The Toda women arrange their fine, black, glossy hair in long ringlets which are hung on shoulders through both sides of the face. The top of

the head is smoothed and parted with extreme care, The men wear their hair in thick mop cut evenly at a moderate length. The children have their heads shaved at the sides and top, leaving locks before and behind.

PERSONAL CARE & DECORATION : Toda men and women have an antipathy for bath. They take bath only once or twice a week. They smear ghee on head, face and body which emits unpleasant odour.

Toda women are tattooed on the chin below the lower lip, on the upper and fore arm and on both sides of the body—above the breast and below the neck. The usual patterns consist of dotted lines and circles. Adult men often reveal raised scars on the left shoulder which are made by hot-sticks and is believed to cure the fatigue from milking. They do not paint their bodies.

Social Organisation

INTER TRIBAL RELATION : Four other tribes viz. Badagas, Kotas, Kurumbas and Irulas, inhabit the Nilgiri Hills. There exists a mutual relation between the five tribes which represent an example of inter tribal division of labour, The Badagas who are predominantly agricultural provide the neighbours with grains and act as middle-men in the trade with the plains people. They pay an annual tribute of grains to the Todas because the latter are considered original owners of the land and probably because of their fear from Toda sorcery. The Kotas are primarily an artisan tribe and provide their neighbours with pottery and ironware. They supply the music in Toda ceremonial occasions receiving in return the flesh of the sacrificed buffaloes and other dairy products. Todas, on the other hand, supply milk and various other dairy

products to the other tribes. The inter tribal relation is mainly economic and in rare occasions it is ceremonial and political- However, this relationship mainly involves between the Toda, Kota and Badaga, while that with the Kurumbas and Irulas is not very intimate though they often supply forest products. In tribal heirarchy the Todas consider themselves superior to other tribes. They often give equal status to the Badagas but the Kotas, Kurumbas and Irulas are definitely regarded inferior.

DIVISIONS : The tribe is divided into two divisions or moieties viz. Tartharol and Teivaliol (according to different authorities, these are also called, Tradharshol and Teivilkhol, and Tharthazoll and Thevelioll). These divisions are strictly endogamous, resembling castes, though irregular unions are allowed. There exists minor divergences in dialect and ceremonials between the two moieties but the major difference rests on the fact that all the higher sacred herds and dairies are owned by the Tarthar division while the Teivali division furnishes the sacred dairymen who tend them.

CLAN : Each moiety is further divided into a number of exogamous clans. The Tarthar which is larger and considers itself superior to the Teivali, contains twelve (or ten) clans, while the Teivali contains only six. Each clan owns a number of villages or *mads* (or *munds*) and is named after the name of the chief of the villages, *etumad*. Hence, the clans are territorial in nature rather than totemic. The villages under a clan, which are one to three in number, are situated near one another. There are two divisions of each clan, called *kudr* which function only in ceremonial occasions. Besides *kudr* a clan has another division viz *polm* (or pallam) whose function is to regulate

the sharing of the expenses incurred by the clan, such as, repairing or rebuilding of the chief dairies, among the component families.

Clans among the Todas, thus, have some social and ritual significance. Formerly land and chief villages with their dairies were owned by different clans. But now-a-days properties being largely centered in the family or the individual the economic importance of the clans is gradually decreasing.

FAMILY : A clan is divided into a number of families or *Kudupeli*. As the clan organisation has got some definite role in Toda society, the families are also recognised as social units. Families often correspond the *polm* division of a clan.

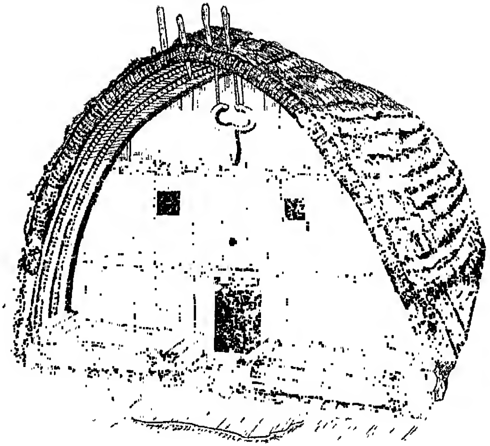
A Toda family, being primarily based on polyandry. is constituted of brothers, their common wife or wives (as polygymy is at present practised along with polyandry) and their married and unmarried sons and unmarried daughters.

In a family, as also in the Toda society, the position of women is very low. As a consequence, women are not entitled to perform any inportant work and they have no role in ceremonial performances save and except a few minor ones. The division of labour between the two sexes is not balanced. The Toda men, in addition to the political, religious and ceremonial activities, do most of the work such as, herding, milking, churning, fuel gathering, building, trading and also cooking. Of course, now-a-days, women are allowed to do the cooking for the family. Women's activity is confined to such minor ones as cleaning the house, furniture, utensils, mending and embroidering clothes, fetching water, sifting and pounding grain, and the like. However, the women are not treated

with cruelty or contempt though they are placed low in status in the society. This inferior status of women may be a result of their negligible contribution to the economy of the tribe.

KINSHIP: The Toda system of reckonning kins is of classificatory type. A kinship term, thus, not only relates to actual blood relation but also to other persons of same sex and generation. Thus the term 'father' includes not only one's physiological or legal fathers but also one's paternal uncles, husbands of one's maternal aunts and all other males of father's clan and generation. Similar is the case with the term 'mother'. 'son' and 'daughter' are equally inclusive terms ; cousins are thus 'brothers' ond 'sisters'. But for cross-cousins there exists a special term—*matchuni*. Marriage between the cross-cousins (i. e. children of a brother and a sister) is preferred among the Todas. Hence, the daughters of mother's brothers of a boy and the sons of father's sisters of a girl are potenlita spouses, and they are *matchunis* to each other—even if they are not actually married. Accordingly, one's mother's brothers aud husbands of father's sisters are 'fathers-in-law' (*mun*). Similarly, the terms for 'mother-in-law' 'son-in-law' and 'daughter-in-law' have a broad connotation.

MARRIAGE: The orthodox system of marriage among the Todas is polyandry, though monogamy and polygymy is not uncommon. The characteristic form of polyandry is of fraternal type, i. e. several brothers marry a woman. The polyandrous marriage might have been resulted from the scarcity of women in the tribe as a consequence of practising female infanticide. But, at present, as that practice have become prohibited there is an increase in number of



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TODA : 1. A typical hut
2. Milk vessels and churning equipment

female. And as such, persons who at first were involved in a polyandrous marriage occasionally marry other women—thus resulting a complex state of polyandry and polygyny. But these latter wives are also equally enjoyed by the other partners of the former polyandrous marriage.

Marriage with a non-Toda is prohibited. One should normally marry outside one's own clan and within one's own division. Marriage between cross-cousins is preferred.

Infant marriage is customary. The father of a boy selects a girl and arranges matters with her parents. The wedding ceremony, which takes place at the bride's house, involves the presentation of a loin cloth as the bridal gift. After marriage the bride continues to live with her parents and the groom (s) is expected to give her loin cloth twice a year until she reaches the age of ten when a mantle is presented. Shortly before puberty the bride should undergo defloration by a man of another clan, in case this performance is deferred after puberty it will be a disgrace on the part of the girl. On reaching the age of fifteen or sixteen the bride receives a dowry of clothing and ornaments and goes to reside with her husband (s), where she is inducted into her husbands' clan through a ceremonial feast.

Sexual immorality and adultery are unknown to the Todas. Both before and after marriage a Toda woman enjoys great laxity in sexual relations. Besides her husbands, recognised lovers and authorised sacred dairy men, a woman may enjoy irregular unions with persons of her own clan and outside the division she belongs to.

Divorce may be enforced on the grounds of laziness or foolishness of the wife but not on barrenness or adultery. If a man divorces his wife he pays a fine of

one buffalo to the wife's parental family and receives in return any buffaloes he has given as funeral contributions. A widow, if she survives all her husbands, may remarry and in that case the new husband must make payment of buffaloes to the children of her former marriage. A widow may also go back to her parental family with her children or live with her sons or with a married daughter.

DESCENT : Descent is patrilineal. A man belongs to the clan of his father. Among the Todas the physiological father of a child may or may not be its legal or social father. And a legal father may not necessarily be the physiological father of a child. Paternity is determined by a ceremony—the bow and arrow ceremony—which takes place at the seventh month of pregnancy. During the first pregnancy of a woman this ceremony is a must. And the man who performs the ceremony will be the legal or social father of all the children born to the woman thereafter, until another man performs the same ceremony. The ceremony involves a ceremonial presentation of a toy bow and arrow by a man to the woman. The ceremony is performed in the woods where a lighted lamp is placed in the niche of a tree. The pregnant woman receives the bow and arrow, raises them to her forehead and gazes to the lamp until it goes out. Then they eat together the meal cooked by the man and pass night there in the woods.

CHILD BIRTH ; At about the fifth month of pregnancy an expectant mother secludes herself for a month in a hut, built for the purpose at some distance from the village. She has to perform certain ritual acts both at the time of entering and leaving the hut. At the time of delivery the mother kneels with her head on husband's chest and prayers are uttered along with

certain ritual acts. The midwife cuts the umbilical cord with a knife. After birth it is buried.

NAME GIVING : The face of a baby remains covered until it is three months of age, as a protective measure against evil eye. Then it is uncovered through a special ceremonial performance. Shortly thereafter, in another ceremony, the child is given a name and its head is shaved. Names are commonly derived from such things as, prayer words, gods, sacred hills, buffalo pens, dairies, etc. Each individual possesses a nickname usually given by the Badagas. The Todas show reluctance in uttering their names and greater so, their nicknames.

PROPERTY : The Todas recognise individual, family and clan-wise ownership of different kinds of property. Individual ownership is vested in clothing, ornaments and household utensils. House and smaller villages are owned by the families , and buffaloes, whether sacred or ordinary, are usually the properties of individual or family though the highest of the sacred buffaloes are owned by the clan. Land and the chief villages with their dairies are owned by the clans.

INHERITANCE : The inheritance of property is always patrilineal and it follows legal descent, which may not coincide with actual paternity. The legal sons of a man either hold in common or distribute equally among themselves the private property of their deceased father. If the brothers live together after their father's death they hold the inherited buffaloes in common ; in case they separate, the buffaloes are equally divided among them with the exception that the eldest and the youngest receive an extra buffalo each. Debts are also inherited. Daughters inherit nothing.

AUTHORITY : The tribe as a whole has no chief. The people are governed by a council of five members

called the *naim.* One member is chosen from a Teivali clan, three from Tarthar clans and the fifth member is a Badaga. The *naim* concerns itself chiefly to settle disputes between clans, families and individuals. In case of disputes a representative of each party sits with the council. An influential member frequently dominates the council either by his personality or exercising bribery. It is the business of the *naim* to settle when the ceremonies, especially those of the more important dairies, shall be performed. The *naim* also settles the disputes arising out of transferring of wives. Besides *naim*, the clans possess informal heads and each family has a head who is responsible for the collection of its share in clan expenses.

FUNERAL : The Todas observe two funeral ceremonies. In the first funeral the cropse is burned while in the second, portions of skull and hair, rescued from burning, are buried. In the case the deceased is a child, the two ceremonies are performed in the same day, but in the case of an adult the second funeral is postponed for several months or even a year—usually it is performed for several persons at the same time.

The first funeral in the case of a man is performed at a dairy or at a hut specially built for the purpose representing a dairy ; and in the case of a woman, at a separate hut which is later burned. The ceremony observes a series of rituals which mainly include the sacrifice of buffaloes and providing the deceased with food, money, ornaments and other gifts. Before burning, however, the valuables are thriftly taken back and are returned to their donors. The chief mourner is a man's brother or son, a woman's husband, or a child's father. At a funeral of an unmarried boy a female cross-cousin plays the role of his wife and widow. The persons attending a funeral are rendered unclean, and

they refrain from mentioning their names until they observe purificatory rites.

At the second funeral ceremony also elaborate rituals are observed with even more sacrifice of buffaloes. The relics of the corpse collected from the first funeral are now annointed with butter and are burned along with certain vessels, implements and ceremonial articles. The ashes are then buried and covered with a stone. All present at the ceremony salute the stone, cut off a lock of hair as a token of mourning and break their fast. On the subsequent new moon a purification ceremony is performed to cleanse the contaminated persons and places.

At a funeral ceremony kinship ties play the important roles as to who shall perform which rite and who shall make contributions of buffaloes, food, money and other necessary articles. The kotas serve the music at the ceremony and receive in exchange the flesh of the sacrifised buffaloes.

RELIGION : The Todas believe that after performing the second funerary ritual the souls of the deceased go to *Amnodr*, the spirit world where they lead a life much like that on the earth with their buffaloes and dairies. They believe that as the souls walk along their legs gradually wear down and when those are only knee length they are re-born into this world.

They believe in a vast number, as many as eighteen hundred, of superior beings or gods. The two most important deities are Ö*n* and *Teikirzi*. Ö*n*, who is a male deity, is believed to have created the Todas and their buffaloes, and he presides over *Amnodr*, the world of the dead. *Teikirzi*, the elder sister of Ö*n*, is believed to be the divine ruler of this world who has instituted the characteristic customs of the Todas. Except these two,

nearly all other deities are associated with different hill-tops. There are two river deities associated with the two chief rivers of the district.

The outstanding characteristic of Toda religion is the extra-ordinary emphasis on rituals which are almost exclusively concerned with the buffaloes and the treatment of their milks as also during pregnancy, name giving, marriage and death. In fact, rituals permeate every phase of the life of the tribe.

The dairies are Toda temples and the dairy men, priests. The sacred dairies fall into different classes according to the degree of sanctity of the associated sacred buffaloes. They range from village dairies to the venerated *ti* dairies—the highest of all. The ritual also varies in complexity and elaborateness with the varying degrees of sanctity.

The priests, i.e., the dairymen should undergo elaborate ceremonies which vary in complexity with the varying degrees of sanctity of different dairies, before assuming the office. The sacred dairyman of a *ti* is called *palol* who not only undergoes a series of initiation ceremonies but also observes strict regulations and different taboos throughout his tenure (i.e. eighteen years).

The Todas believe in divination. Diviners are consulted to ascertain the cause of misfortune, sickness, death, burning of a dairy, drying up of a buffalo, and the like.

Sorcery is practised by certain families. A sorcerer exercises his magical powers only in cases of quarrels and deceit. A man affected with an act of sorcery calls a diviner to find out the sorcerer ; and when it is known to him he goes to the sorcerer with a present of food. Then the sorcerer withdraws his magical powers.

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5

THE GONDS

INTRODUCTION : The Gonds, along with some forty allied tribes who referred themselves as Gonds, comprise a population, as per 1961 census, of over forty five lakhs. More than fifty per cent of the population is found in Madhya Pradesh, the rest being scattered in different provinces of the Peninsula, and Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal.

Gonds deserve special interest for the fact that they are the only Indian tribe who set up a kingdom with fifty two *garhs* and ruled the greater part of central India from about 14th. century A. D. (or earlier) to 18th. century A. D., when they were conquered by the Mughal and Maratha powers and retired deep into the forests.

They call themselves *Koi* (plu. *Koitar*). The name 'Gond' has been given by their neighbours which means in 'Gondi' language, 'cow-killer' and 'beef-eaters' ; and so the higher class members of the tribe object to being called as Gond.

Habitat :

The land of the Gonds was formerly called as Gondwana which included the Satpura Plateau and a section of the Nagpur Plains and the Narbada valley to the south and the west. In present day Madhya Pradesh their maximum concentration is in the districts of Mandla and Bastar. The vast tract of these two districts lies roughly between 17°46′ and 23°22′ N. latitudes

and 80°15′ and 82°15′ E. longitudes ; and approximately corresponds the old Gondwana.

The land of the Gonds has a varied climate, though mainly it is temperate. Due to its own physical characteristics a portion is covered by a dense growth of tropical forest. The trees of importance are *Sal* (Shorea robusta) *Segun* (Tectona grandis), *Sajor* (Tarminalia tomentosa), *Palas* (Butea frondosa) and *Mahua* (Bassia latifolia). As regards fauna, mention may be made of tiger, panther, wild dogs, bear, wolf ; and hare, boar, porcupine, monkey, deer and antelope.

Physical features :

The Gonds are a people with dark skin and medium height (av. 162.06 cm.). They are dolichocephalic and leptorrhine. Hair is dark and smooth with scanty beard and moustache. Face is broad with thick lips. They are slenderly built with narrow shoulders, pelvis and hips ; but they bear a strong physique. The frequency of different blood groups of a section (Maria) of Gonds are, B—34·10%, O—28·50% A—26·00% and AB—11·40%

AFFINITY : The racial position of the Gonds is still uncertain. Some grouped them among the Dravidians (Risley), some among the Pre-Dravidians (Dalton) ; while others (Majumdar) are of opinion that the Gonds are a people of the aboriginal type mixed with the Mediterranean stock of Europe.

Some authorities hold that the Gonds came from the south driven by the Dravidians on the basis of the fact that they possessed a language which has a common ancestor with Tamil and Kanarese.

On the cultural aspect the Gonds of Mandla use a rain-hood (*khumri*) which is not used by any other

people, except Bhumia, in that region. This type of rain-hood is again met with in the districts of west-coast. However, the affinity and origin of the Gonds is not at all clear.

LANGUAGE : Formerly, the Gonds spoke a language known as 'Gondi' which is related to Tamil and Kanarese ; but at present they speak a dialect of Hindi known as 'Gondwani' which is closely related to Bagheli or Rewai and which is also a dialect of Eastern Hindi.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : Majority of the Gonds are cultivators—the traditional system being shifting cultivation, known as *bewar* or *bimra* in Mandla (M. P.) and *dippa* or *penda* in Bihar. Now-a-days plough cultivation is in regular practice though shifting cultivation is stil practised in the hilly areas. A good many individuals are engaged as agricultural labourers, ordinary labourers, wood-cutters, etc. Though the subsistence economy of the Gonds is cultivation it is often supplemented by hunting, fishing and collecting.

In shifting cultivation, at first a jungle plot is selected and the trees are cut between November and April and allowed to dry up until May-June when those are fired. Then after the first showers of monsoon seeds are sown by simple broadcasting method with the help of hands. The seeds are mostly of inferior crops, such as, millet, castor-oil plant, cucumber, gourd, beans, etc. Except a little amount of weeding no care is taken during the entire operation—from sowing of seeds to harvesting of the crops. Sometimes hoe type of implement is used to distribute the ashes all over the plot ; otherwise, the axe necessary for felling the trees is the sole implement used in this type of cultivation. The

same plot is used for three consecutive years, the production being richest in the second year, which may be again taken up after ten or twelve years.

Besides shifting cultivation they, especially the plains Gonds, practise plough cultivation. The fields under plough cultivation grow small millet, gourds, melons and poorer oil seeds; wheat and paddy are produced only in rare cases. Majority of the Gond cultivators have garden plot (*Bari*) attached to the household. These garden plots are richer than the fields because these are constantly manured by cow-dung and household rubbish and produce maize, gram, and sufficient quantity of vegetables and tobacco for day to day consumption.

As a subsidiary occupation and also as a sport the Gonds practise hunting and fishing. In former times their main weapon for hunting big games was spear (*barchhi*) but at present they use guns and for small animals and birds they use different kinds of traps and nets. Among the big games wild boar and deer are particularly mentionable, while tigers and panthers are also hunted. Small games comprise, in the main, small deer and rabbits. Besides, several kinds of birds are also trapped. On the other hand, fishing is done with the help of differeat kinds of nets (*jal*). Fishes are also collected from water holes and by poisoning the water. Fishing with hooks is not very common and by shooting is still rare.

FIRE: The Gonds usually make fire by strike-a-light method. It needs a piece of flint and a piece of steel. The steel is attached to the shell of a *Bel* fruit (*Aegle marmelos*) which is filled with silk cotton—the fuel. The flint is held between the thumb and the index finger of one hand and is struck with the piece of steel in the other hand which produces sparks. The sparks

are caught by the fuel. The flint is known by them as *chakmak.* Besides flint-and-steel the Gonds also produce fire by fire-drills.

FOOD : The staple diet of the Gonds is formed by two varieties of small millet, known as *kodo* and *kutki.* These are usually boiled in water in the form of a broth and taken three times a day—forenoon, afternoon and night. At night they prefer a dish of rice. Sometimes certain vegetables and pulses are added to the *kodo* or *kutki.* Sometimes the husked millet (*kodai*) is ground into flour and taken in the form of flat cakes (*godala*). At times of scarcity they also consume *mahua* flowers. If possible, they like to change their monotonous diet by fish. Gonds like all sorts of meat; except beef and pork which is taken by certain sections of them. They very much relish chicken. The distilled liquour of the *mahua* flower is taken in large quantity by the Gond. This liquour is not only an addiction but also indispensable in all religious and ceremonial performance. Of the narcotics they are habituated in taking betel (*Pan*) in smoking tobacco in a clay pipe or a leaf-pipe, and *ganja*, the flowering tops of hemp tree.

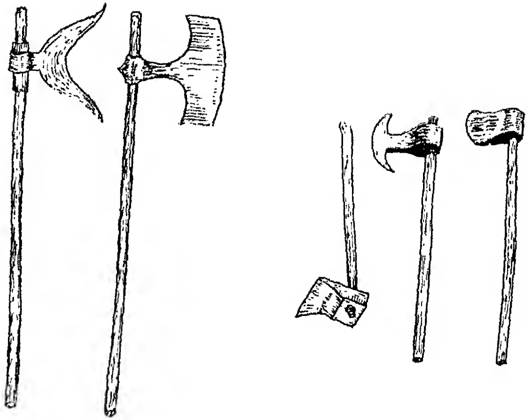
HOUSE : A Gond house often consists of four huts—one for dwelling, one stable, one shed for various purpose and another for occasional guests. The huts have generally gabled of hipped roofs with walls plastered with mud on mats. As a rule, the huts are devoid of any ventilators except the door, and have a small veranda or porch in front which is slightly elevated from the ground. The outside walls are often decorated with various human and animal figures. Huts are generally built on nine wooden posts (*thamar*)—four in the front row, two in the middle and three in the back row. Long

sticks of bamboo are tied to the posts as supports for the mats which are made of reeds of *chirra* grass (*Themeda laxa Stapf.*). Plastering of mud on these mats forms the walls of the hut. The roof is usually thatched with mats of *Kharia* grass on which *mohlain* leaves are spread at first which is again covered by bundles of *Kharia* grass. The roofs overhang the walls as a measure of protection against rain. Now-a-days, houses with walls made of big lumps of clay or sun dried bricks and roofs with tiles are not uncommon.

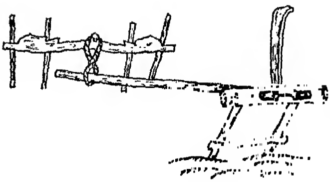
Gonds prefer to build houses on small cliffs or on high lands. A Gond village is formed by loose clusters of two or three houses with intervening garden patches.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS : The various utensils used in a Gond house consist those related to grains, such as, grinding mills, grain-pestle and winnowing scoop; for storage and cooking, like, baskets, pots and pans ; and those related to economic activities, such as, axes, picks ; and furniture. There are two kinds of grinding mills, one made of stone (*Chakkia*) used for hard grains as gram, *masur*, wheat, maize, etc., and the other made of clay for soft grains as, *kodo* and *kutki*. The grain-pestle is a heavy log of wood with circular cross-section, about six inches in diameter. It is narrow at one end and notched near the middle allowing a better grip. It is used for pounding grains in the hole of a wooden log fitted into the floor. The winnowing-scoop (*Supa*) is made of plaited blades of *chirra* grass and is used in separating the chaff and false grains from the consumable portion.

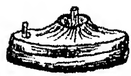
Baskets are made of various materials as bamboo strips, grass or twigs and are of various dimensions, There are all possible shapes, large and small, with or without a lid.



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GOND : 1. Different types of axe and an adze
2. Harrow fitted with yoke
3. Stone hand-mill

For protection against rains both men and women use a rainhood known as *khumri*. It has a shape of a flat conical hat with a very broad rim. Its diameter is three to five feet. It has got two frames—inner and outer—made of long bamboo slivers, and two or three layers of *mohalin* leaves are placed in between the frames. The rims of both the frames are then plaited together.

The cooking pots and pots for carrying and storage of water are, almost always, earthenwares. Well-to-do Gonds sometimes possess few brass plates and glasses. The spoons and ladles are commonly made of gourd.

The Gonds are too poor to provide any furniture in their house. The most common furniture to be found in majority of the cases is small stools (*pirha*) made simply of a wooden block with four stump legs or sometimes with string set on bamboo-plaited (*machia*) seat. Next in occurance is a bedstead made of bamboo or wooden logs with four legs and the frame is tied with a network of strings made usually of coconut fibre. This is known among then as *khatya*.

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION : The male Gonds wear a short loincloth (*languti*) between the legs fitted with a waist string. One end of the loincloth hangs in front while the other end is bundled up at the buttocks. They often wrap a sheet of cloth (*pichauni*) over the boby above waist, leaving their shoulders bare. Now a days they sometimes wear short shirts or tight fitting waist coats. In winter they cover their body with a sheep-wool blanket (*Komal*).

A woman wears a long sheet of cloth (*dhoti* or *lugra*). It covers the body over the right shoulder and reaches upto the knees. The Gond women living amongst the non-tribals, often wear bodice and in that case they are supposed to cover their heads with one end of the *lugra*.

Usually the hair of a Gond woman is not kept loose—it is parted at the middle and tied tightly with the help of a string at the occiput. They use common wooden combs. A woman, before marriage, cannot possess a comb of her own and at that time she uses her mother's comb. During menstruation combing of hair is prohibited.

Gond men wear wristlets (*chura*) made of tin or silver, a ring of brass or silver (*mundri*) and ear rings, sometimes three in number i. e., upper ear (*bari*), middle ear (*bala*) and lobe (*lurki*). Gond women on the other-hand wear various types of ornaments, mostly made of silver or brass. The common necklaces are made of silver rupees (*bawal*) or eight-anna pieces (*Nagpuria hamel*) linked with silver chains or simple strings. Other forms of neck ornaments are *hasli* and *sutiya*—both made of silver. The ornament worn in the ear lobe is *dhar* of a flower-like design, and in the uper ear, *genda*—all made of silver. On wrists they wear glass bangles (*churi*) or silver bracelets ; at the elbow—*bahota,* and various kinds of rings in different toes.

Like other aboriginals, the Gonds also love tattoo marks. The men tattoo their outer legs and arms—now a days tattooing of personal names is most common. The women, however, prefer more elaborate tattooing. Within few years after birth the girls are tattooed on forehead, temples and right cheek. The whole leg of a Gond women is found tattooed with stars, crosses, and animal and human figures.

Social Organisation

DIVISIONS : The tribe is divided into a number of endogamous sub-divisions which behave like castes. As they comprise of a large population and are scattered over different districts it is not unlikely to meet with various sub-divisions in different areas—and the basis of the

division is also not universal for all Gonds. Thus in Mandla district there are four sub-divisions of the Gond viz., Deo-Gond, Suryabansi Raj-Gond, Suryabansi Deogarhia Gond and the Ravanbansi Gond. The Deo-Gonds are fully hinduised and possess highest social rank. The Suryabansi Raj-Gonds and Suryabansi Deogarhia Gonds assume the rank of kshattriyas and demand equal status with the non-tribal cultivators. These two Suryabansi sections may possess Rajput 'blood' and are completety hinduised. The Ravanbansi Gonds are placed lowest in social rank and the hinduised Gonds do not like to recognise them as Gonds at all.

In Bihar they are divided in three endogamous economic classes viz., Raj-Gonds, the aristocratic class; Dhur-Gonds or the commoners—the peasantry; and Kamias—the labourers.

In Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh, the Gonds are primarily divided into two groups—the Maria Gonds and the Muria Gonds. The Marias are further sub-divided into two sections viz., the Hill Marias—residing mainly the hilly tracts of the district; and the Bison-Horn Marias, who wear Bison-horn head dress in ceremonial dance. The Murias on the other hand are divided into three sections viz., the Jagdalpur Muria, the Jhoria-Muria and the Ghotul Muria.

Each endogamous division is further sub-divided into a number of exogamous groups—these are either territorial groups (*garhs*), or totemistic clans (*gotra* or *kur*). The *garhs* are named after the old fortresses, citadels or hills of the old Gond kingdom and in former times a *garh* was a functional group which has become defunct at present except in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh. The clans are named after animals, plants and trees. The relation between the totem and totemic group is not

always clear and in some cases the meaning of the totem is not understood. The totems are not always venerated. However, clan exogamy is strictly observed by the Gonds. In Mandla all the clans are divided into a number of groups, each group having eighteen clans, and a member of one of these eighteen clans cannot marry a member of the same group though the latter may belong to a separate clan. Though, at present the number 'eighteen' is not fixed and all the clans of a particular group are not the same everywhere. It is probable that in former times all the Gond clans were grouped into two exogamous moieties. This suggests the existence of a typical dual organisation among the Gonds.

It is probable that in former times a clan group occupied a particular area and thus received a territorial (*garh*) name, and clan exogamy also meant territorial exogamy. But later, when all got mixed up, the *garh* organisation and *kur* organisation appeared as two independent entities.

FAMILY : Each Gond *gotra* is divided into a number of families. A family usually includes the husband and wife, their married sons with their wives and children, and unmarried daughters.

Within a family there is sharp division of labour on the basis of sex. A man's sphere of activity generally concerns the field and the stable while a woman takes the charge of all household works and other associated lighter jobs.

A family is run by the total pooling of the resources of the family and those earned by individual members, governed by the head of the family, who is generally the father. In the absence or incapability of the father, the eldest son takes up the management. Parents form the central core of a Gond joint family and after their death,

the brothers usually get separated and establish their individual families. As the father supervises the smooth running of the entire family and the work of the sons, the mother supervises the household work—it is she who allots different duties to the different daughters-in-law.

KINSHIP : The kinship terminology of the Gonds is of descriptive type ; though there are certain terms which are used to denote a number of persons. Thus, *Bap* or *Baba* is the term used to denote father. but it is also used to denote any old man even a stranger. Similarly, *Bai* is the term by which one denotes his wife, father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter, elder sister's daughter, younger sister's daughter, wife's elder sister, fathers elder brother's wife, and so on. *Noni* is used for wife as well as younger sister ; similarly *Budha* and *Budhi* have classifictory use.

There are certain rules of restrictions and avoidances which regulate the behaviours among the kinsmen. A man or woman should not call his or her parents-in-law, elder or younger sisters-in-law by name ; of course, they may be called by their nicknames. Avoidance prevails between a man and his mother-in-law, a woman and her father-in-law and also husband's elder brother. A woman should also avoid her younger sister's husband. The behavioural relations between a woman and her husband's younger brothers, and between a woman and her elder sister's husband are not restrained because, according to their marriage rules these persons are potential husbands.

MARRIAGE : Gonds are usually monogamous, polyandry is unknown, while polygyny is creditable. Marriage between the cross-cousins is considered as the most suitable mating and so it is preferred. A boy can marry his maternal uncle's daughter or his paternal aunt's daughter. Their idea behind cross-cousin marriage is

that the loss of a woman incurred on a family by marriage is compensated by marrying that woman's daughter to her brother's son. This idea is expressed by them as *dudh lautana* (return of milk). When a girl is married to a person other than her cross-cousin, the father of the potential husband is compensated with a fine in cash.

When cross-cousin marriage is the rule, marriage between parallel cousins is strictly prohibited. Of course, if two sisters are married to different clans marriage between their children is not objected, but such a marriage is rare.

Besides regular marriage, a man has the right to marry his elder brother's widow and his wife's younger sister. Grandparent-grandchild marriage is also practised among the Gonds, of course, beyond the prohibited degree of relationship and with not much disparity in age of the two partners.

Adult marriage is the rule, though, under Hindu influence, pre-adolescent marriage is also practised. Matches are generally arranged by the parents. But among the Marias consent of the bride and the bride groom is essential ; and among the Murias, boys and girls generally select their partners during the period of their stay in the *ghotul*.

The usual form of marriage in Gond society is through negotiation. In such a marriage a bride groom's father has to pay a bride price (*sukh*) which is a fixed amount—as in eastern Mandla it is nine rupees. The groom's father has also to supply the provisions for the wedding dinner though the ceremony is performed in the bride's house. The marriage ceremony is an elaborate one and is full of different rites and divinations ; and at every stage of the ceremony the participants take liquor.

Besides usual form of marriage, marriage by service,

marriage by intrusion, marriage by elopement and love marriages are not rare among Gonds.

Divorce is permitted, but it is the man who can claim a divorce on the grounds of adultery, childlessness and quarrelsomeness of his wife. If a woman wants separation she can simply leave her husband's house and reside with her lover—in such a case the lover is to pay a compensation (*karchha*), as fixed by the caste elders, to the former husband.

A widow usually marries a younger brother of the dead husband. In case she marries another person the former is entitled to a compensation. A widow may not remarry if she has got a number of children, because after remarriage she has to leave the children to the family of her deceased husband. Sometimes, widows without any child may return to her parents, provided the latter refunds the money taken as bride-price and the provisions for the wedding ceremony to the dead husband's family.

PROPERTY : In earlier times when shifting cultivation was the principal occupation of the Gonds, lands were owned by different groups. A member of a group could exploit a particular plot of land for a certain period of time after which he abandoned it and another member stepped in—they had no right to dispose of or donate any plot of land. But now-a-days, since 1868 after the enforcement of Land Settlement Act, lands are owned individually. House is also a private property and proprietory rights rest on the head of a family.

As regards the movable proprety, theoretically, everything earned by the members of a family should be handed over to the head of the family and no private ownership is indulged. But in actual practice, private ownership is recognised to some extent. Thus, all the presentations and gifts a woman or girl receives on her

wedding or on other occasions, are her presonal property —she may use those as she pleases ; the wages earned by a woman in hired labour are not considered as family income and she can utilise it according to her will. Clothings are individually owned but other members of the family may borrow clothes from each other at the time of necessity.

INHERITANCE : The immovable property is inherited by the sons, daughters get no share. After father's death the entire property is managed by the eldest son, but if the brothers separate each receives an equal share. If a man has no son, his property goes to his brothers or brother's sons. In the absence of any male relative of a preson, his property is inherited by the daughters.

If the sons get separated from the father's family before the latter's death they may get their shares, and in that case the son who remains with the father is entitled to the largest share. In case of any dispute regarding the distribution of a property the case is referred to the village council.

If a youth serves for the daughter of a man, who is called a *lamsena*, and if the man has no other male heir, the property is inherited by the *lamsena*. But if there is a nephew of the deceased person, the *lamsena* receives less than half of the property.

If a woman, afrer divorce, marries another man, or if she runs away with him, she may take along the presents she received in her wedding.

AUTHORITY : The Gonds do not possess any strong tribal organisation, but within the boundaries of each village there exists some caste authority which includes all the castes residing in the village. Each caste has its own leaders who are usually the heads of the joint families. In matters which affect the interest of the village in general,

all the constituent members of the council discuss and settle the issue ; but in the case an issue affects a particular caste, members of other castes do not bother.

The village council tries the social, religious and occupational traditions of each caste. A man's position in the council is enhanced by his wealth, eloquence and backing of many relatives.

DORMITORY : Among different sections of the Gonds different types of dormitories are found. In Bastar, among the Hill Marias, dormitories are used exclusively by males—married, bachelors and boys—women are not allowed to visit those. Among the Gaitra Gonds of Chanda district there are barrack-like dormitories—one for the bachelors, another for the married men and a third for the unmarried girls. The Murias near Kondagaon and Narainpur in Bastar have dormitory houses. (*gotul*) which are shared by both unmarried boys and girls. Dormitories are not found among the Gonds of the Mandla district, and Bison Horn Marias of Bastar.

The Hill Marias have dormitories in every village. These are houses to accommodate all the males who have not enough space in their houses. And during the harvesting season persons who are to perform certain religious rites are tabooed to have sex indulgence, take shelter in the dormitory houses. Thus, the Hill Maria dormitories serve certain economic and religious purpose.

A Muria *gotul* on the other hand is a very elaborate institution which trains and educates the younger generation of both the sexes in social and economic matters.

A Muria *gotul* is a big rectangular house with no window and only one small entrance in front. It is made of wattle and mud, rinsed with cow dung solution

surrounded by a low fence with an open courtyard (*agana*) or dancing ground in front. The inside of the *gotuls* are sooty, dark and suffocating.

It is a compulsion for all the Muria boys and girls to visit the gotul and for this no initiation ceremony is necessary. Each *gotul*-going boy is known as *chelik* and the girl as *motiari*. Within the *gotul* organisation each *chelik* has a rank name and certain duties are allotted according to rank. The head *chelik* is known as *sidrar* or *chalau*, and in order of rank there are *dewan, gaita, tahsildar, subedar, kotwar*, and a chain of other minor officers. The sweet-hearts of different *cheliks* are called by the *chelik's* rank name with the feminine suffix, *-in*. Thus the sweet heart of *chalau* is called, *chalamin*, that of *tahsildar* as *tahsildarin*, and so on.

The senior *gotul* members train the younger ones in social works, tribal disciplines, mutual cooperation and sexual activities. As a consequenee, sexual intercourse is freely permitted within the *gotul* which often matures in a permanent union.

At the time of any sort of necessity, harvesting, house building, or any ceremonial occasion, any villager may ask for help of the *gotul* members ; and they gladly meet those aganist certain remunaration, which is, in most of the cases, a feast. Thus in very many different aspects of Muria life, *gotul* forms an essential organisation.

FUNERAL : Both cremation and burial are practised by the Gonds. The hinduised section usually cremates the dead. However, the unmarried children and persons died of accidents or by an epidemic, are buried. The original custom was to cremate only the prominent personalities. In case the corpse is buried it is so

placed that the legs point towards the north ; but in case of cremation the legs point towards the west.

The corpses to be cremated are taken to the *mar-ghat* which is situated near a river or pond and those to be buried, to the burial grounds which are situated on the outskirts of a village.

The nearest relative of the deceased is the chief mourner who is usually, a son or brother, or the husband of a childless woman. The affinal kins (*nat*) of a deceased are indespensible in a funeral ceremony. They must be called immediately after the death of a person and they are to perform a series of ceremonial rites in connection with funeral. It is the duty of the *nat* relatives to purify the mourners on completion of the mourning period.

The mourning period lasts for ten days in case the deceased is a male and it is nine days for a woman. The mourning ends with a grand feast given by the deceased's family to the entire village. This funeral feast is indispensible though it may be postponed for convenient period, but in that case the mourner family has to perform it in much more lavish scale. If the date of the feast is postponed, the purification rites are performed on the third day.

After delivering the funeral feast the Gonds feel for putting the spirit of the dead to rest, by which they mean uniting the spirit with *Bara deo*, their supreme god. This ceremony is usually performed at the ancestral village (*garh*) of the deceased, of course if it is not too far. This ceremony may be performed at any time, and practically, they wait until several members of the same *garh* die.

Sometimes, specially when a man of position dies, the son or his (or her) nearest relative erect a wooden pole

on the side of the main road as a mark of veneration to the deceased. The passers by throw stones to the pole to show their respect to the dead, and in course of time the heap of stones entirely covers the pole. In memorium of more important personalities they erect stone platforms.

RELIGION : The religion of the Gonds is characterised by the worship of a number of gods. The supreme god is called *Burra deo* or *Bara deo* who is believed to reside in *sajar* tree (*Terminalia tomentosa*) near the village and is represented by a flat stone slab placed vertically on a platform made of mud. *Bara deo* is prayed for general protection. Pig, goat, and hen are the sacrificial animals for the *Bara deo* though pig is preferred most.

The *Bara deo* or the great god is addressed by different names in different regions, for instance, *Bhera-pen* in Bastar, *Pharsa-pen* near Chanda, *Badiyalpen* in Orissa, *Bariya-Sah* in Sarguja, and so on.

It is believed that *Bara deo* provides the sptrit of the deceased with food and drink after it has become united with the *Bara deo* and till the spirit is reincarnated in the form of a baby, cow or any other animal.

Besides *Bara deo*, there are a number of minor gods of which there are household gods, cattle gods, field gods, and a number of female deities.

The principal household god is *Narayan deo* who protects field and garden, house and door, baby, cow and calf. He is worshipped on the door-sill and pig is sacrificed to him. Another household god is the divine pair—*Dulha deo* and *Dulhin deo*—whose seat is in a corner of the main room. The cattle god is *Holera deo* who is represented by a miniature rain-hood (*khumri*) hung up from the roof beam of the cattle

shed. Of the field gods, *Bhagesur Pat* (tiger god), *Khermai* (lord of the village), *Aloha deo* (guardian of the fields) and a goddess, *Mero dai* may be mentioned.

There are mainly two female deities worshipped by the Gonds, these are, *Bhawanimata* who is represented by a brass figurine or a clod of clay with an impression of *trisul*. A he-goat is sacrificed in worship. The other female deity is *Rat mai* (mother Night)

Apart from all these gods, the Gonds have a number of clan gods—and different clans have different set of gods. These gods are represented by material objects as in one case, a piece of cloth is embroidered with the figures of bullock, deer, snake and elephant. These gods are worshipped in a place called, *Deokulla* where women are not allowed to take part in any rite. Such worship of clan gc ds is not found in Mandla.

MAGIC : The Gonds believe in magical rites and witchcraft. Epidemic diseases are often attributed to as the actions of witches who are often traced out and punished. Success in fishing is also believed to depend on the magical rites which they perform before such an undertaking. They have got a number of festivals with certain magical rites marking the different agricultural operations.

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6

THE BHILS

INTRODUCTION : The Bhils form the third largest tribe in India. The tribes more populous are the Gond and the Santal. They have a population of about 3. 8 millions according to 1961 census. At present they are much modified in race and culture. A large number of them are rather indistinguishable from the nontribal peoples of their neighbourhood.

Habitat

The Bhils are mostly spread over the uplands of the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, their population being largest in Madhya Pradesh.

A large portion of the territory occupied by them is covered by the forestclad mountains of the Vindhyas, the Sahyadris and the Satpura. The soil ranges from fertile alluvium in the plains to barren in the stony hills. There are a large number of streams, most of which become dried up in the dry seasons. The main rivers are the Narbada, the Tapti and the Mahi.

The climate is very unhealthy in the slopes of the hills and malaria is prevalent from September to February. The rainfall is usually below 50 inches annually and the mean annual temperature ranges from the minimum of 62°F to the maximum of 90° F.

A large number and varieties of trees and shrubs are found in this area of which special mention may be made of teak, blackwood, *mahua*, mango and bamboo.

The fauna include tiger, jackal, panther, rabbit and many kinds of snake. Deer of many kinds and elephant were common in this part of the country in the past.

Physical features

The skin colour varies from light brown to dark brown, the predominant colour being brown. The form of the hair is generally smooth and the colour black with occasional reddish tinge. Eye colour generally varies from dark brown to light brown, the common colour being dark brown. Mongolian fold is absent. The brow-ridges are moderately developed. Forehead is somewhat retreating in a considerable proportion. Lips are generally thin in the Bhils of Gujarat but thick lips are often met with in those of Madhya Pradesh. Chin is usually oval or round and it is weakly developed. Beard and body hair are scanty.

Stature varies from very short to tall, the average stature being medium (163cm). The average length and breadth of head are respectively medium (181. 8 mm.) and very narrow (137. 4 mm). Cephalic Index varies from hyperdolichocephaly to hyperbrachycephaly and the mean lies in the borderline of dolichocephaly and mesocephaly. Nose is generally mesorrhine, though platyrrhine noses are also found in a large proportion. It is remarkable that a significant percentage of Bhils, specially in Gujarat, shows leptorrhine noses. The nasal root is often depressed. Face is generally mesoprosopic, average Facial Index being 85. 6. Broad, massive faces prevail though small faces are also not uncommon. The body is fairly well developed. The Bhils show the highest frequency of blood group O (37. 1%) and more or less equal frequencies of A and B, the latter having a higher tendency (A-24. 6%, B-27. 0%).

AFFINITY : From the analysis of the anthropometric and serological data on the Bhils, Majumdar has found that they show significant differences from the 'high caste' people of northern India. They are distinguished also from the tribal people of northern India. The narrow nose of the Bhil entitles to separate consideration from the Australoid. They approach the 'higher castes' of northern India in some of the physical traits and are distinctly different from the other Australoid tribes. Guha finds racial relationship between the Bhil and the Chenchu, on the basis of coefficient of racial likeness, worked out from his own unpublished anthropometric data. Otherwise also the Chenchus are widely known to be similar to the Bhils. According to Venkatachar they are possibly a proto-Mediterranean race and are one section of the Mundari speaking peoples. They occupied the central regions across the Vindhyas and came in contact with the Dravidian speaking peoples. From the point of view of language the Bhil cannot be identified with the Oraon or the Munda. Thomson does not find any connection between the Bhili and the Dravidian languages of southern India, nor with the Gondi, Santhali and Koli. Although race and language are not inseparably connected and language is no test of racial affinity, near dissociation of the present-day Bhili language from the Mundari, and Dravidian languages cannot be easily accounted for.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : The main occupation of the Bhil is cultivation. The traditional method of cultivation is a type of shifting cultivation which was practised both on the hillslope and on level lands. In hillslope cultivation, called *chhimata,* the forest growth on the

hillslopes was first burnt. Tall trees are stripped of their branches and small ones cut down level to the ground. All these felled wood are then left for drying. These are then set on fire before the onset of rains. The ashes are evenly spread and water is splashed over it. The whole business is finished in three days. Seeds of different plants are sown consisting of cereals, pulses and vegetables. This mixed growth is harvested according to the ripening time of each. The same plot is cultivated for three or four years after which the plot is abandoned and the whole process is followed in a fresh plot of land. It is to be noted that in such method of cultivation seeds are sown in the first year and fresh seeds are not sown in the following years.

A slightly different method of shifting cultivation is followed in level land. In this case trees and brush-woods are cut in the forest before the onset of rainy season, and are carried to the field where these are spread over to dry. These are then burnt and the ashes are evenly scattered on the plot with a rake. Water is sprinkled over it and seeds are sown. This type of cultivation is called *dajia*.

The above mentioned methods are not widely followed now as the burning of forest is not legally allowed. But the Bhils practise these where they get opportunity. The present day method of cultivation is the type of settled plough cultivation which is widely followed throughout agricultural India. The main crops which are raised are rice, wheat, maize, millet, pulses, chillies, brinjals and papaw. At times certain leafy vegetables are also raised. Paddy is cultivated by transplantation method.

In shifting cultivation the main implements used are hoe, axe and sickle. The other implements are weeder, rake, goad and crow bars.

Fishing is one of the important occupations of the Bhil. They often put barrier in a streamlet, keeping one or two small opening. Traps are put near these openings and the fishes moving through the openings are caught in the traps.

They sometimes catch fish collectively. In these cases usually the women take part. They go to a stream with kneedeep water in the forenoon of a day, the particular spot is being selected beforehand. They stand in a row and start fishing with cast-net, the fishes caught are collected in baskets on their heads. All of them move a step forward and repeat the procedure. The catch is not divided equally among the participants and each catches for herself. Sometimes men join in this collective fish catching. They do this with big triangular nets, tied to three bamboos, eight feet in length and eight or six feet in breadth. The men remain at a forward position from the row of the women. This collective fishing is called *doyaro*.

The -other fishing implements of the Bhil consist of two varieties of valveless traps, one of which is a bamboo-mat bound to form the shape of a pumpkin. The other is made of bamboo splits and has two open circular ends one of which is much wider than the other. There is a constriction near the narrower end. It is called *molo*, and almost identical to *polo* used by fishermen in Bengal.

The Bhils sometimes hunt in the jungles—the animals being birds, pigs and other small games. Their main weapons are bows and arrows. The bow-stave is made of bamboo, its string being made of either thin bamboo strip or strong rope. The arrow head is of steel and it is neatly tied to a bamboo stick. The other end of the arrow-shaft is provided with feathers which are glued to it so that the flight of

the arrow is guided correctly. Bolt is also used in killing small birds. In this case one end of the bamboo stick is made rounded so that it may strike with a strong bump.

Some of them are quite expert in shooting stones or missiles from slings. For snaring birds they make a device made from bamboo strips and glue is spread over the strips so that the birds may get stuck to them. They also have traps to catch pig and some other small animals.

Besides these occupations, the most important auxiliary occupation of the Bhils consists of doing jobs for contractors such as felling the trees, carrying these to desired transportation centre. They get wages for these works and have become much dependent on this occupation, locally called *kabadu.* Sometimes they are paid advance money as security for next year's *kabadu* and are forced to do it even at the risk of agriculture. Minor economic occupations of rhe Bhil include collection of fruit, honey and other jungle products and wage-labour. Occasionally they sell basket, bamboo wicker-work or mats, pulses, chillies, raw mangoes and other forest fruits.

LIVE STOCK : The domestic animals of the Bhil consist of bullocks, cows, goats and fowls. Bullocks are used in plough cultivation. They rear the cows not for milk but for bullocks. Goats are reared both for milk and meat. Fowls are kept both for eggs and meat. Moreover goat, fowl and eggs are all very important as religious offerings. The attitude towards the cattle ranges from an intense affection to a ritualistic veneration.

FIRE : The Bhils consider fire to be sacred. Formerly fire was produced by striking flint against flint.

Now-a-days this type of firemaking is met with in a small number of cases, safety matches being well known. Usually a fire is maintained at home wherefrom they may get a flame by putting dry grass or wooden chips on the live cinders.

FOOD : The main diet of the Bhils is that which is produced in their fields, millet or wheat forming usual staple food. They take pulses and vegetables with it. Rice is taken usually in the form of rice-flour. Fish is eaten whenever caught. Meat is taken when important guests come to the house or in festive occasions. Milk and curd are not usually consumed by the elders. Ghee is prepared when they get plenty of milk.

Liquour is usually taken which is either prepared by themselves from palm juice or *mahua*, or it is purchased from shop. They smoke tobacco and some of them are addicted to opium. Ganja is also known to them and smoked by some.

VILLAGE : The villages are not generally very populous and the houses are neither arranged in rows, nor in groups but are scattered. Cluster of houses is not however infrequent. Grass bundles are tied to the trees on the road side to mark the boundary of a village. On the outskirts of the village there are shrines of a number of gods, and in some villages commemoration stones are found. The choice of a village site is guided by metaphysical events.

HOUSE : The site for building a house is selected carefully and divination is necessary for it. The Bhil houses, *koo*, are rectangular buildings raised two or three feet off the ground on a layer of earth and stones, with walls rising upto four to six feet from the ground. The roof is inclined at an angle of 45° to the length sides. The maximum height of a house is not more than fifteen

or twenty feet. The building materials include bamboo, wood, thatch, mud and cowdung plaster. The superstructure of the roof is made of bamboo splits and thatching is done with teak leaves or forest grass.

The floor is often uneven and covered with cowdung paste. The walls are made of,bamboo splits which are generally plastered with mud and cowdung. There is a small door in the front wall for the entrance of the inmates including both man and animals. Sometimes an entrance is also found on the back side which is strictly private. There is no window or other opening for ventilation. There is an open space at the front of a hut where cattle is kept in an improvised shed. A wooden cot or two are also kept there for taking rest. In the dry season hay and grass are stacked there. There is a kitchen garden in front or at the back of a house.

The majority of the houses consist of three rooms —a kitchen, a retiring room and a store room, the kitchen being generally in the rear part of the house. Sometimes there is another room in the front which is used as a drawing room and is separated from the inner portion by a closely woven bamboo curtain. The richer ones have sometimes five or six room in their houses.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS: Household utensils include earthen vessels for cooking and drinking, earthen dish, bamboo cup, earthen water pot, earthen bowls and earthen jar. Now-a-days the earthen vessels and articles are in many houses have been replaced by enamel and brass ones. Besides these a large number of bamboo made articles such as grain container, mat, baskets are also found in their houses.

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION: The Bhils wear cheap and coarse clothes. The usual dress of the men consists of a waist cloth, *falu*, which does not

reach below the knee, a shirt or a collarless coat, *bandi*, and a turban, *paghadi*. When they stay at home they work with a loin-cloth, *khoytu*, and the turban only. The turban does not indicate social status but it has become an inseparable part of their dress. It also plays a more important role, as whenever a man divorces his wife, he tears off the turban-end and gives it to her.

The dress of a woman consists of a *falu* either red or black in colour, and a strip of cloth broad enough to cover the breasts only which is called *kachawo*. Now a-days a bodice is worn, in place of *kachawo*, covering the upper part of the body down to the waist.

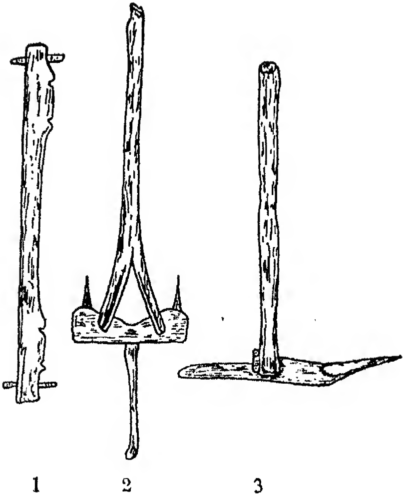
They are fond of personal adornment and both the sexes wear silver earrings and fingerrings. There are various ornaments on the arm. The women sometimes wear ornaments on all parts of body from head to toe.

The women do their hair by parting it in the middle. Sometimes it is tied into a bun or pigtails are left to dangle down at the back. Body is often decorated with tattoo marks in the form of a crescent moon, a cluster of points, two parallel arcs, stars or flowers.

ARTS AND CRAFTS: The Bhils do not know making pottery and weaving clothes. They however make varieties of articles from bamboo. They are very fond of music and possess a large number of musical instruments.

Social Organisation

DUAL DIVISION: The Bhils are divided into two large exogamous divisions, *haga* and *hagwadia*. The former includes brothers, parallel cousins, clansmen and a still wider circle of kins on the paternal side. The other division, namely *hagwadia*, is made up of the relatives



BHIL : Agricultural implements

1. Yoke
2. Harrow
3. Plough

with whom marriage is allowed. Each of these sections is composed of a large number of clans. This dual division of the Bhils is merely for marriage and is useful for marital settlements. In other spheres this dichotomy is not observed among them.

CLAN : A large number of exogamous clans, *jat* or *vans*, are noticed among the Bhils and these are patrilineal. Out of these clans there are a number of territorial clans named after a particular village or place to which the group originally belonged. As for example, the clans *Malsap, Rajbarya* and *Mokhdya* are derived from Mal, Rajbar and Mokhdi Falls respectively. There are a few clans whose names are taken from the names of some tribes of the neighbourhood. Besides these all the other clans seem to have totemistic origin though at present totem significance is practically absent. The totemistic clans of the Bhils include the *Henglya,* derived from *biri* leaf tree, the *Dogrya* from a mountain, the *Wanariwala* from monkey.

FAMILY : A Bhil family, *vasilu,* consists of a man, his wife and their children. Grown-up sons may or may not separate. Married daughters always separate, but when a married daughter or sister dies leaving children behind they are looked after and brought up at his place till they reach the age of eight or ten. In some cases a man may be found to live in one family with his sons and grand-children.

KINSHIP : The kinship terms of the Bhils include both descriptive and classificatory terms. There is no particular term for grand father, he is being described as the 'older father' or the 'aged father', *dohno bahko.* Grand mother is also described similarly. Paternal male cousins are described as the 'sons of father's brother', and the paternal female cousins are described as the 'daughters of father's brother'.

To exemplify the classificatory terms it may be mentioned that one term, *kaka,* is used to address all male persons of father's age. All women of mother's age are similarly addressed by *jiji* (mother's sister).

The prevalent systems of marriage have influenced the kinship terminology of the Bhils. Thus, due to the custom of marrying either of the cross-cousins, the same term, *mamo,* is used for the father's sister's husband, the mother's brother and the wife's father. Similarly the wife's mother, the mother's brother's wife and the father's sister are addressed by the same term *fuisi.* On account of junior levirate and junior sororate, the step father is called *kaka* and the step mother, *jiji.*

The relationship between the in-laws, *vevais,* is very important. For a man, his son's wife's father, latter's brothers and other relatives stand as *vevai* and vice versa. On occasions of joy or sorrow they are the first to increase or share them. Whenever there is a marriage ceremony at one of these people's places, the other party is invited with much respect. They exchange gifts at these occasions and in hours of need they help each other.

There are a large number of joking relationship among the Bhils, of which special mention may be made of that between a woman and her husband's younger brother and husband's sisters. There is also joking relationship between two cross-cousins and between two *vevais.*

They also observe a few avoidance rules the most rigid one being between a woman and her husband's elder brother. She should not speak to him, nor can she utter his name, and even she is not allowed to look at him. Similar but less rigorous avoidances are there between a woman and her husband's father, and between a man and his wife's mother.

MARRIAGE: Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage among the Bhils but polygyny is also allowed and is found in a considerable proportion. The incentive of taking more than one wife is mostly economic in the form of help in food producing activities, but there is also a social dignity in it. They practise both types of cross cousin marriage, where a man marries either his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter. They also prefer levirate, where a widow marries her deceased husband's younger brother, and sororate in which case a man marries an unmarried younger sister of his deceased wife. They observe village exogamy and regional endogamy.

The usual system of contracting one's marriage is by negotiation which is conducted by the elderly relatives of the parties. In many occasions marriage follows an elopement. Sometimes a married woman goes to the house of the man of her choice and reports his mother that she has come to live with her son. This is reported to the father of the woman. If he fails to disuade her, the man is asked to marry her. In this case the man is to pay the bride price to her first husband. This kind of marriage is called *jai pethi.* There is another custom, similar to *jai pethi*, where a man runs away with somebody's wife. The matter is settled by the elderly peoples of the village.

In case of a boy unable to pay the bride price he stays with his father-in-law along with his wife as *gharjamah* and works in the father-in-law's fields and gives assistance to other works. The general term of this servitude is seven years. The relation between the *gharjamah* and his in-laws is usually cordial.

Widows are allowed to remarry after the completion of one year from the death of her husband.

DIVORCE: A Bhil man is free to divorce his wife for certain reasons like disease, laziness, immorality and suspected witchcraft. In this occasion the man calls the people of his village as well as of hers, and tells them that he wants to divorce her. He tears of a little piece from his turban and gives it to her. After this the woman can go to any man she likes and the former husband is not entitled to the bride money from her new husband. This divorce is called *chhedu fadi apavu.*

PROPERTY: The property of a man is divided among his sons not equally, but in increasing proportions according to seniority. The eldest son gets the largest share and the youngest the smallest. Sometimes the shares of the sons other than the eldest are divided equally among themselves. The brother of a man who stays in the same family gets a share of the property. The daughters are not entitled to any share but when there is no son, the daughters inherit the father's property. The debts of the father are divided among the sons.

VILLAGE ORGANISATION: The village, *gam*, is a very improtant unit in Bhil social organisation. A village contains a number of families. It acts as a unit for many economic functions as well as in socio-religious matters. In harvesting and house-repair each family is helped in turn by others of the village. The village as a unit participate in fishing activities and in the works of the government on public roads. In the matters of ceremonial feasts all the villagers are invited. There is common rights over the village pasture for the village as a whole. Official guests are considered as the guests of the whole village.

Generally they observe village exogamy and villagers consider themselves brothers. Whole village gathers together and takes interest in the ceremonies in connection with

one's marriage or in the mourning for a death. In case of worship of gods, or festivals or in exorcising witches the *gam* acts as a unit. Poor families are helped, orphans are looked after or somebody in trouble is rescued by the whole village together.

VILLAGE OFFICIALS : The highest in rank among the village officials is the village headman or *vasawo*. He settles quarrels between two villages, intervenes in the unhappy marital life of any villager and also takes an important part in restoring peace of the village at all occasions. His advice is sought by other villagers in times of need. He takes the initiative for appeasing angry gods. In all socio-religious festivals and ceremonies he holds a key position. He is also a representative of the government and for that he looks after its guests. He can speak to the government for the whole village. In return for his services to the government he gets a lump sum annually and enjoys some rent-free land. The office of the *vasawo* is hereditary and is succeeded by his eldest son. The wife of *vasawo*, the *vasavi*, also has an important position in social ceremonies. Her post is however derivative.

The next highest in position is the *punjaro* who acts as the intermediary between the gods and the Bhils and thus he is much respected. He also has an important role in social life of the villagers. He is also an expert medicine man and prescribes medicine for diseases of known causes. This post is not hereditary.

The *pardhan*, is the second official appointed by the government. In the absence of the *vasawo* he officiates for him. He also settles minor matters even when the headman is present. This post is also hereditary and is succeeded by son.

The next in importance is *vartanio* who carries out

the commands of *vasawo.* He conveys government messages to the villagers. He gets a remuneration and some rent-free land. The post is hereditary.

The *gori* has a very important place in the social structure of the Bhils, he himself being a non-Bhil and belonging to separate caste of same name. He is assigned with the work of grazing cattle. He gets some food from the owners of the cattle in exchange of his work.

In some villages there are two other officials one being the *deshmukh* whose principal duty is to visit a group of ten or twelve villages to see whether all is well and paying taxes. He also settles quarrels which do not go to law courts. He gets a piece of rent-free land. The other is *dumaldar,* a sort of zamindar of the village. He is given a village by the government for any service rendered by him to the front. He has absolute rights over the village land occupied by anybody. He collects the taxes from this village for himself.

Besides these officials they have another official called *kotwal,* a non-Bhil, who precedes the mourners in connection with the carrying of a bier.

VILLAGE PANCHAYAT : The Bhils have a village panchayat, *panch,* which is an inevitable part of their social organisation. The panchayat is however not formal. All the oldmen of the village meet for all important matters and confer among themselves. These matters include social and magico-religious affairs. In affairs of inter village concern the elderly men of both the villages meet to reach a compromising decision.

DEATH AND FUNERAL : Among the deaths some are considered not to be connected with any supernatural agencies while some others are believed to be due to these. When a man dies, all weep loudly. Nobody is

allowed to leave the house. The body is allowed to lie on the cot. Liquour, food and a fowl are sacrificed. The body is washed and new clothes are put on him. The body is decorated with all the ornaments he possessed. After these each of the assembled puts some money in his mouth. The women throw some rice over the wrapped body and ask him to give it to their dead relatives. Then the wife of the man has to lie with the dead body for some time. In case of the death of a wife the husband does this. The men carrying the bier go to the crematorium, the women go to the stream. In the *mahan* the cot is put down with the head of corpse pointing to north. The cot is moved five times round the pyre and then placed on it with the head pointing to north. The mouth of the dead is washed and he is fed. Some money is tied to the waist. The pyre is then lit and they go away to the stream. Water is offered for the dead at the stream. After coming home they sprinkle water on themselves, and the house is cleaned and cowdunged. The mourning house does not prepare its own food but food for the deadman to be cooked in this house. Out of this food three shares are put on a winnow, one for *Ath Rayo*, one for *Pui Rayo* and the middle one for the dead man. It is kept outside to be eaten away by anything. On the third day the male members of the household have to shave their beard and heads. On the twelfth day a dinner is given to all friends. For a year food is offered to the dead man twice everyday. The dead body of grown up children are cremated but of small children buried. Those who die unnatural death are buried. The *kotwal* performs these death rites.

RELIGION : The Bhils have a large number of gods and goddesses. *Raja Pantha* is the first god who possesses enormous strength and has all sorts of

powers. *Vina Deo* is the companion of *Raja Pantha.* They are remembered in all ceremonies. *Mata Pandhar* is the chief queen of *Raja Pantha* and she is supposed to increase one's fortune. Goats and fowls are sacrificed to her. *Malkho* is offered all things in all occasions. He is worshipped before inhabiting a village, building a house eating a new crop or doing ceremonies for the dead. There is a presiding deity of corn who is called *Nandervo.* He is offered a cock and a goat every alternate year. *Hirkulyo* is the great agricultural god. He is offered goat or fowl and small idol of horse in the headman's house. *Matnyodev* and *Khetarpal* are respectively the gods of leafy vegetables and watch-god of the fields. There are a number of deities of hills and forests of which special mention may be made of the *Baghdev,* and *Gopehohan,* the first being ceremonially offered a goat, and the second is the god of serpents and in every village there is a stone consecrated to him. Each hill is a god. There is the watergoddess, *Pa Janfali,* who dwells in water and controls all aquatic animals. She is worshipped when a village is being inhabited and also when somebody is dead. *Megh Raja* is the god of rains. There are other powers like *Toranyo,* and *Hanuman* who are worshipped by the village as a whole.

The Bhils have no temple or house for gods. They raise memorial stones for the dead. Gods are worshipped by three intermediaries : *Badwa, Punjaro* and the *Kotwal.* Divination is practised to detect the cause of disease.

Calamities like death of cattle, stop of milk in cattle, failure of crops in a village are believed to be the works of sorcery of a man or a woman. The witch is supposed to assume the form of a jackal or buffalo or a serpent, but the most favoured form is that of a cat. Witch is detected through oaths and ordeals.

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7

THE SANTALS

INTRODUCTION : The Santals constitute one of the largest tribes of India numbering more than three million souls (3, 152, 545 according to 1961 census). They are distributed in the States of Bihar, W. Bengal and Orissa. They are very hardy, simple hearted, efficient agriculturist and excellent hunter. Their history is the history of a hard struggle with the surroundings just to maintain their existence.

Their faithfulness, their simple heartedness made way to the land-lords and other employers to exploit them miserably. When the exploitation surpassed all limits they revolted against the British rulers and Zamindars and tried to turn them out of the country. This was in 1871. The upsurge was very successsfully oppressed by the then British Govt. and the leader of the movement of the name Bhagirath, died in the same year at Bhagalpur jail !

Habitat

The Santals inhabit a wide area included within the States of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa, lying roughly between 20° and 28° North Latitudes and between 83° and 42° East Longitudes. Their main concentration is in Bihar, mainly in the districts of Santal Parganas, Bhagalpur, Hazaribagh, Purnea, Manbhum, Singbhum and Munghyr, of which the Santal Parganas may be regarded as the centre of their present habitat.

In West Bengal they are mainly distributed in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Malda, Midnapur and 24 Parganas. In Orissa they are numerous in Mayurbhanj district.

Physical features

The Santals are a dark brown complexioned, predominantly dolichocephalic, mesorrhiny and short to medium statured people. Their face is euryprosopic to leptoprosopic with straight and broad forehead and trace to moderate supra-orbital ridges. Their eye colour is dark brown with straight eye-slit, and straight nasal bridge with moderate depression of the nasal root. Chin is oval, lips are medium to thick and malars are prominent. The hair is wavy with sparse beard and body-hair. The distribution of different phenotypes of blood group are : O—31·70% ; A—21·38% ; B—35·63% and AB—11·30%

AFFINITY : There are different racial elements in the makeup of the physical features of the Santals. Medium Stature, dolichocephalic and mesorrhine is the Palae-Mediterranean element of Guha ; while medium stature, dolichocephalic, leptorrhine and; those with platyrrhine are Mediterranean and Australoid elements respectively. In general the Australoid element is more dominant than the other two. Sarkar likes to place them in the Mundari Stock on the basis of the high percentage of the B blood group, in the Australoid group A is higher than B. This is also supported from the stand point of language.

Language

The Santals are a Mundari-speaking people included in the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the great Austric family. Their language 'Santali' is one of the oldest tongues of India. Allied languages are spoken by the

Birjia, Birhor, Korku, Karmali, Ho, Bhumij and other Mundari tribes.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : The primary occupation of the Santal is agriculture; hunting, fishing and collecting form their subsidiary occupations. Before becoming agriculturists they definitely passed through the hunting stage which is evidenced by the fact that they are particularly good hunters and perform large-scale hunting expeditions annually.

For cultivation they recognise three classes of land : (i) land in the hinder part of the dwelling (*barge*) where maize, millet, oilseed-plants and varieties of vegetables are grown ; (ii) high land fields (*goda*) not far from the dwellings where varieties of millet and cotton plants are cultivated ; (iii) rice fields (*khet*). Three types of *khets* are clearly distinguished,—(a) summits of undulations (*chaharam*) which are not considered good for paddy cultivation ; (b) lands on the slope of the undulations (*sem*) which are of medium quality ; and (c) lands lowest down the slopes (*sol*) which is considered best.

In most of the cases cultivation is done in transplantation method i.e., seeds are not directly sown in the fields proper by broadcasting but seedlings are prepared first in a separate seed-bed the month of May-June and those are then transplanted during June-July in the main field which is thoroughly ploughed and prepared for the purpose.

Bullocks and buffaloes are commonly harnessed to a plough. Cowdung, kitchen-refuse and ashes serve as manures. Embankments (*bāndh*) are prepared as a measure of irrigation from naturally depressed water-logged areas.

In agricultural operations women are tabooed from ploughing the field. Otherwise, both sexes take equal part in transplanting, deweeding, reaping, threshing, winnowing and husking—the last being exclusively a woman's business.

Santals are expert hunters and they hunt any game available. Hunting probably formed a considerable part of their subsistence in the past but de-forestation except the reserved forests has led them to lay more stress on agriculture. However, they still perform occasional hunting expeditions which may be either informal (*por sendra*) one day hunt or formal (*lo bir sendra*) which lasts for two to four days and requires the presence of a *dehri*—the hunting priest. Such formal hunting expedition (*dehri* hunting) is launched during the months of February & March (*Phālgun*). Before the actual expedition the *dehri* informs the members of the surrounding villages the date of expedition with the help of a branch of a *sāl* tree with leaves, the number of leaves stand for the days to pass before the expedition. The *dehri* is held responsible for the success in the expedition and safety of the participants. To please the *bongās* of the forest he performs some ceremony and offers them sacrifice.

A hunted game is distributed among the participants with a larger share to the man who first hits the animal.

Fishing is another subsidiary economic activity of the Santals. They fish in river, ponds and other water-logged areas with the help of nets, traps and bow and arrow. They also kill fish by using poisonous plants in water. Like hunting they also perform communal fishing expeditions where men from a number of villages participate ; of course, no *dehri* is required in such fishing expeditions. Non-availability of hunting games

and continuous shrinkage of forests have indirectly accentuated fishing as an economic activity.

Besides agriculture, hunting and fishing, collection of a wide variety of plants, fruits, flowers, roots and tubers constitute a major part of the Santal economy. These are not only used as food but also for other purposes like, house building, making implements and other household necessities. Two trees, *matkom* or *mahua* (Bassia latifolia Roxb.) and *sarjom* or *sal* (Shorea robusta) occupy special position in Santal life.

Strong co-operative spirit characterises all Santal economic activities which is evidenced in preparing *bāndhs* in the paddy fields, communal annual hunting expeditions and public fishing expeditions. This spirit has made their existence possible in extreme scarcity and hardship.

FOOD : The staple food of the Santal is boiled rice (*dākā*). They usually take two meals a day and very few can afford a third. In the morning they take boiled rice soaked in water over night (*baisām dāmāri*) with a pinch of salt and chilli and, at times, with fried leaves (*sāng*). At night they take hot boiled rice with vegetable curry (*utu*). At times only they are able to supplement their vegetable diet with fish and meat. Except the meat of dog, cat and horse they take almost every animal they can get as food including varieties of birds. The domestic animals which include pig, cow, buffalo, goat and fowls in the main are slain and utilised as food only in ceremonial or festive occasions. They do not take cow's milk. But due to culture contact with the neighbouring Hindus they are accepting it as food.

They take two kinds of intoxicating beverages. The principal one is made from sundried rice, known as *hāndi* or *hāndiā*. It is so important in Santal life that to

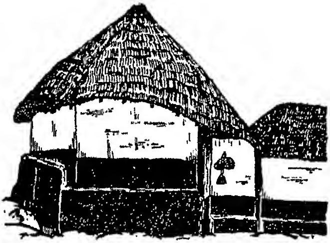
some of their gods and spirits it is a compulsory offering and presentation of pots of *hāndiā* is customary on social grounds. The second variety is distilled from *mahuā* flowers and is known as *paurā*.

They take tobacco in the form of smoking, rolled in a *sāl* leaf ; and also in the form of chewing, mixed with time. Now-a-days of course, they are habituated to take machine-made cigarettes. They have also accepted the *Hooka* (hubble-bubble) for smoking.

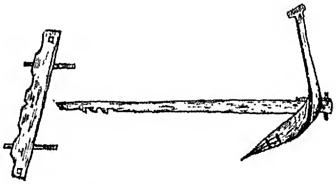
HOUSE : In a village the huts are arranged on either side of the main village street in a single file. The entrances of the huts never face the street. The huts are generally two-sloped gable shaped, though four-sloped huts are not rare. A dwelling complex consists of one or more huts, a verandah and a cattle shed. The principal room where the head of the family lives has a portion partitioned by a low wall, known as *bhitar*, which is the place reserved for family deities and ancestral spirits. In the verandah there is a husking-lever (*dhenk* or *dhenki*) and a mill-stone.

The inside dimensions of an average hut are 14′×12′×8′. Rooms have a single entrance and no windows are made on the walls, except a few, small ventilators placed near the roof. Structure of a hut is made by *sāl* logs, bamboo splinters and rafters of *sāl* wood. The walls are plastered with a mixture of mud and cowdung on both the sides of the frame work, the roofs are thatched with straw or with *sauri* grass while the floors are made of beaten earth with coating of cowdung solution. The outer walls are beautifully decorated with different designs by different coloured earth and ashes of straw.

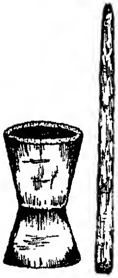
Before constructing a hut they prerform certain divination regarding the safety of the site. The divination



1



2



3



4

SANTAL : 1. A typical hut
2. Plough and yoke
3. Wooden mortar and pestle
4. Hoe

is performed with a cock kept at the site for five days, if the cock remains alive after five days the stte is considered suitable ; and they start construction of the hut after sacrificing a fowl to the *Mārān Buru*, one of their chief *bongās* residing at *Jāher thān*.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS: The utensils of a Santal household are very meagre. They consist of a bed-stead (*charpai* or *pārkom*) made of coarse strings in a rough wooden frame-work ; few brass and earthenware vessels, plates and cups of *sal* leaves, spoons and ladles, some baskets, rainhood and broom-sticks. The Santals of Mayurbhanj usually sleep on a palm-leaf mat (*pātiā*). They have spoons and ladles made of dried and scooped out gourd, known as *bākā* ; the *sāl* leaf plates and vessels are known as *katkom* or *kholka* ; rainhoods (*ghungu*) are made of *siyari* trees, known as *jamlar sakam* in Santali. Baskets for carrying are known as *uduli* and those for measuring paddy, *gauni*. They have carrying nets (*sikuar mārān*) in the shape of bags slung at both ends of a pole and is carried on the shoulder.

WEAPONS AND IMPLEMENTS: The chief weapons of offence and defence are bows and arrows, spears, battle-axes, and shields. Bows are of two kinds viz., (i) Simple bow which is made of split bamboo with the string of hemp, bamboo-strip or bark fibre ; and (ii) Pellet bow which is similar to that of the former with respect to stave but differing in the string ; there are two strings in place of one, which provide a pouch in between for setting a pellet. Arrows are also of two varieties. One, which has got a sharp, pointed, iron head inserted within the shaft ; and the other has a bolt made of a solid piece of wood in which the shaft is inserted. At the posterior end of both the types, feathers are tied for better locomotion of the arrow,

The arrow is used for killing big games by piercing whereas the bolt-arrow is used in stunting birds, etc. A battle-axe (*kāpi* or *tāngi*) has got a wooden handle with circular cross-section with a narrow anterior end which is fitted into the socket of the blade. The blade is made of iron with a concave cutting edge which is very sharp.

The majority of the implements of the Santals are those concerned with their principal economic activity i. e , cultivation. The first to be named is the plough which has got parts viz., the plough proper (*nāhel*) the beam (*isi*) and the yoke (*ārār*). The plough proper is made of a single piece of wood which is thickest at the middle with a rectangular hole to receive the beam, where an angle of about 130° is formed. The position above the angulation is known as body which ends in a handle projected outward ; and the portion below the angle is the shoe which tapers towards the end and is grooved for inserting the plough share. The plough-share is a long and narrow piece of iron. The beam is a solid piece of wood, five feet long, with a rectangular cross-section having one to three notches in its underside for fitting with the yoke. The yoke is also made of a solid piece of wood having two long pegs inserted within two bores made near the ends which keep the bullocks in proper position. The upper portion of the yoke is curved for better fixing of the beam.

For levelling the field they have a leveller (*kārhā*) which is about five feet long and about one foot broad. To this a handle is fixed which is small when drawn by bullocks and large in case it is drawn by buffaloes.

The hoe (*kudi*) is of ordinary Bengal type. It has got a handle which is cylindrical and a blade made of iron

which is flat and more or less rectangular in shape having a socket to which the handle is fitted.

For breaking the clods of earth they use a mallet which is entirely made of wood and has got two parts—a cylindrical handle, about three feet long and one inch in diameter ; and a cylindrical hammer-head which has a hole for providing the handle.

For cutting paddy and dried-up stalks they use two different kinds of implements. One is sickle which is made of a single piece of iron but has got two different functional parts—a blade and a handle. The blade is semi-lunar in shape with serrated, concave cutting edge, the serrations being directed inward and downward ; and the handle is hollow and made by the folded sheet of iron. The other variety, scythe, looks almost like the sickle but it has got a wooden handle into which the semilunar blade is inserted by means of a tang and tightened with an iron ferrule in the junction. The blade has got no serration.

For husking paddy they use two kinds of implements. One is mortar (*ukhur*)-and-pestle (*ṭuk*) and the other is the husking lever (*dhenki*). The mortar is made from a big *sāl* log. Upper half of this log is scooped out in the form of a cup while the lower half is kept solid and serves the purpose of a stand. There is a constriction between the two portions. The pestle is a long piece of wood, circular in cross-section with one end somewhat narrower than the other.

The husking lever (*dhenki*) is an implement consisting of four different parts—a wooden log or lever about six feet long with a rectangular cross-section, a fulcrum, a pestle roughly two-feet long and inserted with the lever and a mortar set within the floor. At about one third of the length near the postesior end of the lever a piece of wood passes through it transversely

which rests on the notches of two vertical posts—this constitutes the fulcrum.

For winnowing the paddy and rice they use a winnowing fan (*hātāk*) which is made of plaited bamboo strips with a frame of split bamboo.

They use different kinds of traps and nets for fishing of which some are automatic. An automatic trap with a single conical valve is known as *torodan.* It is cylindrical in shape, about two and a half feet long, the mouth is wide while the other end is tightly closed. Of the nets mention may be made to the most common ones, the *hunda jāl* and *kabhi jāl.* The *hunda jāl* is a triangular bamboo frame from which the net hangs—one of the bamboo strips of the triangle is protruding which serves as a handle. In case of *kabhi jal* it is a circular bamboo frame with the net tied to it—there is no handle. Now-a-days they also use fishing hooks.

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION : Ordinarily Santal males are scantily dressed, they wear a short cloth (*lengta*), about four feet long, between the legs and tied with a thick string round the waist. They also use short loin cloth hanging from the waist, down to tle knee joints. At present of course wearing of short 'dhoties' and shirts have come into regular use. They do not use any head-dress except on marriage ceremonies or similar other festive occasions when they use a turban, soaked in turmeric.

Women use short saries, seven or eight cubits long one end of which is worn round the waist and serves as the lower garment, while the other end is made to pass through the left shoulder, covering the upper portion, and is left hanging in front. Originally they had no under garments. But now-a-days they have started using petti-coats and blouses. In the Santal

Pravanas, of course, they use two separate pieces, of equal length, for covering the two halves of the body.

The Santal women use a large variety of ornaments. Those are mostly made of brass or silver. The commonest ornament is a necklace (*hansli* or *hansuli*) made of silver. They also like very much necklaces of beads. Among others mention may be made to a heavy, brass anklet (*paina*) ; armlet (*tard*) ; different kinds of silver earings (*jhinka*—for ear lobe, and *khutla*-for upper ear) ; rings (*taka mudam* & *tunki mudam*) ; a tiara like head ornament (*jhipi jhipi*) and a silver waist girdle (*danda jhinjhir*). The Santal women are very fond of flower. They decorate their coiffures with flower, They are very particular in regard to combing and oiling their hair.

Decoration with tattoo marks is so common among the women that a girl without any tattoo mark will not be accepted by her mother-in-law as a daughter of the house ; and should such a woman dies, it is believed, that she will be considered impure by *jom raja* and will be punished in Hell.

ARTS & CRAFTS : The Santals are a people with very good artistic taste which is well reflected on the decorated walls of their huts. They are also very fond of dance and music. Men and women often dance together arranging themselves in a circular fashion. During dance they sing, while some others, standing in the centre of the circle provide the music. Among the musical instruments the chief one is *mādol* or *tumdak* which is a double membrane drum. The other instruments are, single membrane drum, flute, and buffalo-horn trumpet. Dance and music have essential role in almost all ceremonial or festive occasions.

They are not expert craftsmen. Besides some crude weaving, extraction of oil and manufacture of lime, they

have no other craft. Oil is extracted from various oil seeds by making a hole into a large *mahua* tree and pressing the seeds with a log, while the oil is collected in a stone receptacle.

Social Organisation

CLAN : The tribe is divided into twelve exogamous totemic clans (*parish*). Those are,—(1) Hansdak (2) Murmu (3) Kisku (4) Hembrom (5) Marndi (6) Soren (7) Tudu (8) Baske (9) Besra (10) Pauria (11) Chore (12) Bedea. Of these the last one is at present extinct. The first seven clans are supported by their legend of creation—that *Pilcu Haram* and *Pilcu Budhi*, their progenitors, had seven sons. And the remaining four clans are later development. Though the clans, as mentioned above, are totemistic, the totemic objects are not considered as the ancestors of the respective clans. But they believe in the existence of certain relationship with the totemic objects. Thus, members of the Hansdak clan hold sacred the duck ; Murmus revere the Nilgai ; Marndis salute before cutting 'marndi' grass. The totemic objects for Hembrom, Soren, Pauria and Chore are betelnut, a constellation of Pleiades (*sorenko*), pegion and lizard respectively. Besides material objects the totem names were also derived from certain behaviours, such as, the Besra took their name from the immoral character.

The clans are further divided into a number of sub-clans (*khunt*), the number of which varies from clan to clan. According to Campbell the number of sub-clans varies from thirteen to twenty eight with a total of two hundred and two. This figure is not beyond controversy.

The main function of the clan and sub-clan

organisation is to regulate marriage. A man can not marry a member of his own clan. The prohibition is more rigid in the case of intra-sub-clan marriage. Normally, a man is prohibited from marriying a girl belonging to his mothers clan, but if he at all does, he must take care that the girl does not belong to the same sub-clan as his mother's.

In general, there is no clan heirarchy. But the clans Besra and Chore are considered somewhat inferior which is manifested by the unwillingness of other clan members to establish matrimonial relation with these clans.

Both the clans and sub-clans are patrilineal. Women adopt their husbands' clan names through marriage.

FAMILY : The smallest social unit is the family which is generally of two types,—the first one, consisting of husband, wife and their children ; and the second one consisting of grandparents, grand children, married sons with their wives and unmarried daughters. The first one may be called a simple family, while the latter, joint or extended one.

The families are patrilocal i. e.. a girl, after marriage, goes to reside with her husband either in her husband's father's family or in the individual family set up by her husband. In some cases the son-in-law is taken as a son and resides in the father-in-law's house when this son-in-law is called a *Ghardi-jawae*. Such cases occur when a family has got no son but only one daughter ; or if all the elder daughters are married off to different families ; or if a family has only one marriageable daughter and minor sons. In the last case the *Ghardi-Jawae* may set up an independent family when the minor brothers-in-law are grown up.

In a family the authority rests on the father and normally it is the duty of the other members to obey

him strictly. In the absence of the father the eldest son takes the position. In fact the eldest son in a Santal family is looked upon by the younger ones as the representative of the father ; and for that reason the status of the eldest brother's wife is often paralleled with that of the mother.

Within the family organisation there is a division of labour on the basis sex and age. It is the duty of a husband to provide his family members with food materials through such activities as cultivation, hunting and fishing, and with clothings and shelter. On the other hand, a wife has to do all the works concerning the household, over and above, she assists her husband in agricultural and fishing operations too. The grown up boys assist their father while the girls become engaged in household work with their mother. The children are protected by the parents with deep love and affection.

The women, though devoid of certain religious and administrative function, have an important economic status in the family. But she is not considered a mere chattel and she enjoys certain amount of anthority and independence within her own sphere.

KINSHIP : The kinship terminology of the Santal is a form of classificatory system The father and father's brothers are designated by the same term, *apum* ; but this term is modified by a descriptive term indicating younger (*hopen*) or elder (*gongo*). Thus, mother's and father's brothers' wives are also designated by the single term, *ayo.* In this case also same descriptive terms are prefixed to mean the elder or younger. On the basis of such a classificatory system of kinship terminology certain earlier writers (Craven and Skrefsrud) propounded that fraternal polyandry existed among the Santals. But no such fact can be traced in the present Santal society as to call them polyandrous.

There are certain ceremonial rites and duties of certain relations. During the ceremonial purification of the kinsmen from the ceremonial pollution resulted from child birth, it is the father of the child who will hold the oil which the kinsmen will smear before ceremonial washing. The agnates (*bhāyād*) must assemble at the ceremonial occasions of the kins and make presents of *hāndiā* and cloths thereby lessening the burden of the kin offering the feast. The eldest son has to apply the the first fire during the cremation of his father. In ceremonial occasions the maternal uncle assumes a position next to the father and father's brothers, and in their absence he acts as the gaurdian of the family. In marriage ceremony the maternal uncle gets a presentation (*māmāpon*). The son-in-law is supposed to sacrifice goats during certain pujas ; and he also holds the basket (*bahu daura*) in which the bride is raised shoulder-high when vermilion is applied on the forehead by the husband.

There exists taboo relation between a man and his younger brother's wife. It is so great that they avoid even touching one another's shadow ; wife's elder sisters are also avoided. Avoidance also prevails between bride's father and bridegroom's mother and also between bridegroom's father and bride's mother.

On the other hand, joking relation exists between a man and his elder brother's wife. They enjoy considerable freedom, so much so that even sexual intercourse between them is not deemed as a criminal offence. Such a relationship may be explained by the existence of junior levirate among them. A similar relationship exists between a woman and her elder sister's husband. Joking relation also exists between grandparents and grandchildren.

MARRIAGE : Monogany is the rule though polygyny is also found in some cases. They generally practise adult marrige, child marriage occurs in few cases imitating the orthodox Hindu custom. The average age at marriage of a boy is between 18 to 22 years.

In marriage the clan and sub-clan exogamy is strictly observed. A man may marry a non-agnate excluding crosscousins and other prohibited degrees of marriage. A man can marry into his mother's clan, excluding the sub-clan in which she belongs. Generally, three generations in mother's line are prohibited for matrimony.

They practise both levirate and sorrorate but none of these are compulsory. Thus a man may marry his elder brother's widow by levirate, and his wife's younger sister(s) by sorrorate.

Pre-marital sex relation between a youth and a maiden is tolerated, but if such a relation results into pregnancy then the youth is bound to marry the girl, otherwise he would be severely punished and his father would be levied a heavy fine.

There are seven accepted forms of marriage (*bāplā*) which are as follows :

1) *Kiring Bahu Bāplā* or *Raibar Bāplā* : This is the most respected form of marriage, arranged by the parents of the spouses through a match-maker (*raibar*). In such a marriage the bridegroom's father is to pay a bride-price. In such a marriage the bride and the groom, in many cases, are unknown to each other, and therefore, when their parents agree, they are made to meet in a fair. After that an informal inspection of the bride is done by the groom's father along with the village headman and near relatives. When they are satisfied with the bride, a date is fixed when the bride's father along with the village headman, his assistant, co-villagers and near relatives come to visit bridegroom's

house. The bride's father gives his would-be son-in-law a new dhoti and some money, takes him in his lap and kisses him. The same ceremony is performed in the bride's house when the groom's father gives her a brass necklace.

After all these elaborate ceremonies the date for actual marriage ceremony is fixed by the groom's father and is informed to the bride's father through the *raibar*. A string containing knots is sent to the bride's father—the number of knots indicating the number of days to pass before the date of marriage. The months Baisakh and Phalgun are perferred for marriage; and the birth month of a boy is generally avoided.

On the appointed day, the bridegroom, with his younger brother and with the *bariatko* (relatives, friends & villagers) starts for the bride's house in the afternoon. Elaborate ceremonies are performed from the entrance into the bride's village till midnight, after which the actual marriage is performed in the bride's house. The binding part of the marriage involves in the application of vermilion by the groom on the bride's forehead five times and with horizontal strokes. Before the application of vermilion the bride, seated in a basket (*bahu daura*), is raised by her male relatives, while the bridegroom is lifted on the shoulder of the bride's eldest brother.

In the wedding feast the outcastes serve salt and thus they are again accepted by the society, which is declared by the Parganait.

2) *Kiring Jawaē Bāplā :* It means a bought bridegroom and takes place when a girl becomes pregnant in pre-marital sex relation with a man who refuses to marry her either on account of identity of sept or simply he does not want to marry her. Here the offender gives the father of the girl sufficient money to purchase the

bridegroom. The name of the guilty is always kept secret.

3) *Ghardi-Jawaē Bāplā* : In this type of marriage the bridegroom comes to reside in the bride's family which is contrary to the patriarchal system. Here, the bridegroom has to pay nothing to the bride's parents as bride-price but five years' service to his future father-in-law without any wages. All the expenses of the marriage, which is performed at the bride's house, are borne by the bride's father. Such a marriage is resorted to when the bride is the only daughter of her parents or she is very ugly and cannot have the honour of an orthodox marriage.

4) *Tunki Dipil Bāplā* : Persons who cannot bear the expenses of a regular marriage take resort to this type of marriage. The bride gathers all her belongings in a small basket (*tunki*) and she is braught to the bridegroom's house with the basket on her head where the bridegroom applies vermilion to the parting of her hair. No bride-price is required.

5) *Itut Bāplā* :- In Santali *itut* means smearing of paint, and when a marriage occurs from forceful smearing of a girl's forehead with vermilion by a man, that is known as *itut bāplā*. Such an action may be taken in two cases ; (a) when the parents of the girl refuse to give consent ; and (b) when the man is not sure whether the girl will accept him as husband.

The parents and the co-villagers of the girl consider such an act as an insult on their part and they give such a thrashing to the offender that he may even die ; they may even raid upon the man's property. In most of the cases the man after performance runs away with great speed before anyone can catch him. At last a settlement is reached when the culprit's father agrees to pay a

fine (normally, double the bride-price) to the girl's father and also a sum to the village headman ; and marriage is performed in regular way. But if there is any objection to the marriage, the girl should be formally divorced, and she will never be regarded as a spinster.

6) *Nirbolok Bāplā* : Literally, *nirbolok* means 'to run in' or 'to intrude'. If a man after having sex relation with a girl, refuses to marry her, the girl may force marriage by intruding his house. The mother of the man does not accept her readily and takes every measure to drive her out. Such as, by burning chilli, peppers and tobacco, by abusing and cursing her, and the like. If the girl can endure all these, the mother-in-law accepts her and they are married in regular form. In case, the man still refuses to marry her then both of them are fined by the village *panchayat* and the man has also to pay the girl a sum of money.

7) *Sāngā Bāplā* : This form of marriage is contracted between a widow or a divorced woman and a widower or a divorced man. Such marriages are mostly negotiated by the spouses themselves. In this form the bride-price is half of that given in the case of an unmarried girl. The belief behind such reduction in bride-price is that the bride will rejoin her first husband after death and this husband can enjoy her only in this life. In this type of marriage the vermilion is not applied directly on the parting of hair but a flower is smeared with vermilion and is fixed in the coiffure.

DIVORCE : Both husband and wife has the right to divorce. A divorce may be sought on the grounds,— adultery, unwillingness of one of the parties to cohabit with the other, witchcraft, and sterility. A woman, on the other hand, may seek divorce if the husband cannot supply her sufficient food, clothings, ornaments, etc.

If a man seeks divorce he will not get back the bride-price he originally payed, over and above he is to pay a fine of Rs. 5 and a piece of cloth to the wife. If, on the other hand, the wife seeks divorce and cannot prove sufficient cause, then her father has to refund the money received as bride-price.

Divorce is effected in the presence of the villagers assembled for the purpose. In case the husband suspects that his wife practises witchcraft then she is divorced by simply handing her over to her parents or nearest relatives.

PROPERTY : According to the Santal tradition all land belong to the village community and individual proprietory right is not recognised, an individual enjoys only the usufructuary right over land. For this reason, formerly, lands were annually redistributed so that good lands could not be monopolised by a few individuals. Besides land individual ownership is recognised in every case, such as, houses, domestic utensils, weapons and implements, cattle and clothing.

INHERITANCE : Private property is inherited equally by all the sons of a man, except that the eldest gets a bullock and a rupee more than the others. In the Santal Parganas, daughters have no share in property, and in the absence of any male issue the property of a deceased person goes to his nearest male agnates, generally brothers. If the father of the deceased is alive, the property reverts to him. In the absence of both sons and brothers, the property goes to the person's brothers' sons. But in Mayurbhanj the case is somewhat different. There, daughters inherit the property in preference to all the agnates of the deceased, if there are no sons. The property of a childless man is inherited by his widow, if his portion was separated from his brothers. On the

contrary the widow gets maintenance only. The occupancy of land was exclusively inherited by the males, but now-a-days in some cases the daughters are also found recorded as *raiyats* ; and Santal reformists are trying for the recognition of the married Santal girls.

DESCENT : Descent among them is patrilineal, that is, the sons and the unmarried daughters are reckoned through their father's clan. The daughters after marriage adopt the clan of their husbands. Father or the father's father (in case of an extended family) is the head of the family and it is customary to the members of the family to obey him. In the absence of the father, the eldest son succeeds the position.

INITIATION : Every male Santal has to undergo an initiation rite through the *cacho chhatiar* ceremony by which he becomes an effective member of the society and enjoys the rights, duties and privileges of a full-fledged member. Marriage is not permitted to any one who has not performed this rite, and therefore, it must be performed before marriage. If one dies without observing this ceremony his corpse will not be cremated, but will be buried. This rite does not apply to woman because they are not entitled to take part in communal worship of their chief deities, nor they can take the sacrificial meat.

The ceremony concering this rite involves in anointing with oil and turmeric of the *Naeke*, the village priest, and his assistants, down to all the villagers, by the village women. Then all of them assemble, the headman and *Paranik* drink *hāndiā* and send for the villagers. The male-children to be initiated also take it and there they are declared to be purified from the impurities and are initiated into full rights and responsibilities of manhood. There, in the assemblage an old man narrates the traditional story of the creation of the world and their wanderings till they came to their present habitat.

As *cacho chhatiar* is essential for a male-child, so is tattooing for a female-child. A girl without having any tattoo mark is not accepted by her mother-in-law as the daughter of the family and it is believed that if such a woman dies *jom rājā* (god of death) will consider her to be impure and punish her in Hell.

AUTHORITY : The village community is the most important socio-economic and political unit of the Santals. It is governed by a *panchayat* consisting of seven officials, viz.,

(i) *Manjhi*—the headman ;
(ii) *Paranik*—the assistant headman ;
(iii) *Naeke*—the village priest entrusted with the duties of worshiping the national deities ;
(iv) *Kudam nacke*—priest of the spirits residing in the hills and jungles of the neighbourhood ;
(v) *Jog-manjhi*—entrusted to arrange the communal feasts and guarding the morals of the village youth ;
(vi) *Jog-paranik*—an assistant to *paranik* ;
and (vii) *Godet*—the messengar of the panchayat.

The function of the *panchayat* is to solve any problem that affects the interest of the village community. Inter-village disputes are solved by joint endeavour of the panchayats of both the villages. If the panchayat finds it difficult to take any resolution by itself, then all the villagers may be called and after prolonged discussion resolutoin may be taken on general consensus.

Ten or twelve village communities together constitute a larger political unit, the headman of which is called *Pargana* or *Parganait.* The panchayat under the leadership of *Parganait* is constituted by the headmen of

all the constituent *panchayats* together with other prominent persons of the villages. The *parganait* has an assistant called, *deshmanjhi*. The *parganait* deals with the inter-village disputes that cannot be settled by the *panchayats* of the villages concerned.

The supreme authority of the Santal society is formed by the people of a number of groups of villages covering an entire district. This body is known as *Lo Bir* or Hunt Council. *Lo Bir* sits once every year and here all Santals, with or without any official position, have equal status.

Breaches of customary law are settled by village *panchayat*, and the punishments usually consist of fines. The *Pargana* and *Lo Bir* interferes only in exceptional cases. The most severe punishment in the Santal society is social excommunication (*bitlaha*). This is imposed in the cases of violation of clan exogamy, which is temporary and can be withdrawn by performing *jom jati* ceremony and payment of fines ; and tribal endogamy which is permanent i.e., the individual is expelled from the Santal society for good.

The village officials were customarily elected at the time of the foundation of the village and later on the succession was hereditary—the eldest son succeeding the father's office. The *parganait* is elected from the headmen of the constituent villages. During the *Māgh-Sim* festival in the month of Magh (January-February) the *manjhi* and the other members of the *panchayat* place their posts at the disposal of the villagers. After ten days the *manjhi*, convenes a general meeting of all the villagers, offers *hāndiā* to all and informs the people that he will be glad to serve as the headman for the next term ; whereinafter he is usually re-elected and so do all the other officials.

FUNERAL : The Santal usually cremate the dead

body except in the case of a child and a pregnant woman, who are buried. The dead body is cremated on the bank of a nearby streamlet carried by the relatives and co-villagers on a bedstead. The corpse being covered with a new shroud. On their journey to the cremation site they halt at the cross-road and scatter parched rice and cotton seeds to avoid evil spirits. There the women and relatives lament over the corpse. Before setting fire to the funeral pyre the eldest son (or the heir) with averted face inserts a piece of grass between the lips of the dead, and places a silver coin in his hand. Before this the beloninngs of the deceased, which were carried along, are sold at half-price. Then the corpse on the bedstead is placed on the pyre and a small chip is cut off from the collar bone which is kept in a new pot. Then a hen is taken round the pyre thrice and nailed in a corner pole. After this the heir puts a piece of burning wood on the face of the corpse and then the others present proceed to kindle the pyre. After the deadbody is consumed entirely the persons participating the cremation shave, bathe and drink *hāndiā* bought with the money realised from selling the deceased' belongings. On returning the village they hang a bundle of leaves in the house where the dead man breathed his last.

On the sixth day they perform the *tel nahan* ceremony, in which all the villagers assemble the house of the deceased, shave and bathe. While bathing they offer a little earth, oilcakes, oil and *sāl* twigs to the departed soul, and to *Pilcu Haram* and *Pilcu Budhi* who are considered as the first man and woman according to their tradition.

The most important part of the Santal funeral is to throw a piece of bone kept from the dead body into the river Damodar, for which there is no fixed time;

but until it is observed the entire village is codsidered polluted and no sacrifice nor marriage nor any other ceremony can be performed.

The last ceremony is known as *chandan* which involves in sacrificing a he-goat by the eldest son (or the heir) on the floor of the room where the deceased breathed his last. The blood is mixed with some *arwa* (unboiled) rice and the mixture is taken by all the members of the family. Then a ceremonial feast is arranged by the sons in which all the relatives and the villagers are invited. After this the mourners resume their ordinary life.

RELIGION : The supreme being in Santal religion is termed *Thakur* who is the giver of life, rain, crops and all other necessaries. Famines are regarded as the manifestation of His displeasure, which may be incurred by some serious fault on the part of the people. *Thakur* is often referred to by them as *Cando, Sin Cando, Cando Bonga* and *Sin Bonga*, all of which stand for the sun god. Besides *Thakur* they believe in a number of *Bongas* or malevolent supernatural beings.

The chief *Bongas* are, *Maran Buru, Marekó, Jaher era, Gosae era, Pargana Bonga* and *Manjhi Bonga.* The first five *Bongas* reside at the *jaherthan*, the sacred grove near every Santal village, which is constituted of four *sāl* and a *mahua* tree,—the *mahua* tree is meant for *Gosae era.* The *Pargana Bonga* and *Manjhi Bonga* are believed to have supervisory function over other *Bongas.* The *Manjhi Bonga* is located at the *manjhithan* inside the village.

Of other supernatural beings mention may be made to the *Bongas* for village boundary, village outskirts, houshold deity, secret family deity and ancestral deity. The three last named *bongas* reside in the *bhitar* of the principal house.

Besides *bongas* they also believe in *rakas* and *ekagudia*

—the monstrous beings, and *curin* and *bhut.* Women who die in pregnancy become *curin* and men who die before performing the *carho chhatiar* ceremony become *bhut.*

They observe ten annual festivals viz., (1) *Ærak Sim,* (2) *Hariar Sim* (3) *Iri-gundli-nawai,* (4) *Janthar* (5) *Sarhae* (6) *Magh Sim* (7) *Baha* (8) *Chhata Parab* (9) *Jatra Parab* and (10) *Pata Parab.* Of these in the first seven festivals the principal *bongas* are worshipped and the first five are related with different stages of cultivation. The last three festivals are of Hindu origin. The most important festivals are *Ærak Sim, Sarhae, Magh Sim* and *Baha*. *Ærak Sim* is connected with sowing of seeds ; *Sarhae* is the harvest festival which is celebrated for five days and nights, and along with this, on the last day of *Paus* (Dec-Jan), *Sakrat* festival is also celebrated which is associated with ancestor worship. *Magh Sim* is observed in the month of Magh (Jan-Feb) which marks the end of Santal year. During this festival the village *panchayat* is dissolved and re-elected. *Baha* is the Spring festival and during this festival the first fruits of *mahua* and other wild fruits and flowers are offered. Besides *Magh Sim* which takes place near some water, the other three festivals are performed, in the *jaherthan.*

Santal women are believed to practise witchcraft and like *bongas* they can do much harm. It is also believed that such women can influence the *bongas* by their feminine charms and make them do according to their will. To counteract the evil influence of *bongas* and doers of witchcraft, there are specialists known as *jan guru* and *ojha guru.* They take recourse to divination to discover the cause of misfortune or illness. Once the cause is known, incantations and sacrifices are performed to appease the evil-doing *bonga* ; and if it is caused by

witchcraft, the alleged practitioner is driven out of the village.

The Santal believe in certain natural causes of disease as well as those caused by *bongas* and witches. Most common of the natural causes is the dislocation or twisting of any *sir* (i. e., muscles, nerves, arteries and veins). Rabies, epilepsy, scarbies, cancer, ring-worms etc., are believed to be caused by different kind of worms (*tejo*) which may be fairly large or invisibly small. Among other natural causes there are, bad diet, taking unclean food, exposure in mist and fog, and bathing in dirty water.

If an *ojha guru* is called upon to treat a disease, he may give medicine prepared from plants and herbs, as also recite incantations and perform sacrifices. There are some other persons known as *raranik* who administer medicines but know nothnig about incantations and sacrifices. In addition to medicines, sacrifices and incantations they also use charms and amulets to counteract the evil influence of supernatural and human agencies. They recognise a regular science of *ojha* and it is customary for young men of a village to go through the early course of training in *ojha*-science. There is also a special training which follows the preliminary one and lasts for a few years. In specialised training only a few can suceeed and are initiated as full-fledged *ojha*.

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8

THE ORAONS

INTRODUCTION : The Oraons are an agriculturist Australoid tribe distributed over the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. According to the census of India 1961, they number 1,444,559 souls of which about fifty per cent is found in Bihar. In Bihar again, Ranchi district possesses the highest concentration of the present day Oraons.

Though they are mostly found in Bihar it is not their original settlement. They were probably migrated from the peninsular India to their present home which is suggested by the language (Kurukh) they speak, a decidedly Dravidian language distinguished from that of the surrounding Munda tribes. According to Dalton, S. C. Roy and others, their traditions connect them with the Konkan. Thence they are said to have wandered eastward, compelled by different reasons, not clearly konwn, along the central range of hills, and at last have reached their present habitat in the Chotanagpur range.

Habitat

As the Oraons are mostly distributed in Ranchi district of Bihar, it is considered as the centre of their present habitation. The district lies between 22°21′ and 23°43′ north latitude and between 84°0′ and 85°54′ east longitude. It is the largest district of the State which covers an area of 7,035.2 square miles. It is bounded by the Palamau and Hazaribagh districts in the north

by the Purulia district of West Bengal in the east, by the districts of Singbhum and Sundergarh (Orissa) on the south and by the Raigarh district in Madhya Pradesh in the west. The entire district is covered by lofty hills or undulating plateau with varying al itudes ranging from 500ft. to 3000 ft.

Nearly one-fourth of the total area of the district is covered with forests—they are scattered throughout the district. Most common trees are *Sāl* (Shorea robusta), *Asan* (Terminalia tomentosa), *Gāmhār* (Gmelina arboria), *Kend* (Dispyros tomentosa) and *Simul* (Bombax malabarian). *Mahua* (Bassia latifolia) is common throughout the district but they are chiefly confined to the hills.

Chief wild animals of the district are sambhar, chital nilgai, hares and bears. Tigers and leopards are occasionally met with. Snakes of both poisonous and nonpoisonous varieties are found throughout the district.

The mean annual temperature recorded at Ranchi (1960) is 15.9°c. The annual rainfall in the district (1960) is 56.18 inches—the bulk of the rain comes from the southwest monsoon.

The district has no navigable river or canal. The chief rivers of the district are the Subaranarekha, the South Koel and the Sankh.

The district is mostly covered with red (lateritic) soil, except for a small portion in the southeast which contains mixed red and black soil.

Physical features

The skin colour is dark brown, often approaching black. The hair form is wavy with a tendency to curl, the colour and texture of the hair being black and coarse respectively. The colour of the iris is dark. The axes of the eyes are straight with no mongolian fold. The

malar bones are somewhat projecting. The nose is depressed at the root. Lips are rather thick. Beard and body hair is scanty.

Stature varies from short to medium, the average stature being below medium (1604mm). The average length and breadth of the head are respectively 186mm. and 138mm. Cephalic Index varies from hyperdolicho-cephaly to brachycephaly, the average lying in the border line of hyperdolichocephaly and dolichocephaly. Nose is generally mesorrhine, though platyrrhine noses are met with in large proportion. Face form is variable with a greater tendency towards broad faces, the mean Facial Index being 86 31. Two sets of Oraon blood group are available, one from Ranchi and the other from Palamau. There is considerable difference in the distribution of different blood groups in the two sets. The distribution of different blood group percentages of the two samples are given below :

	O	A	B	AB
Ranchi	47.10	12.9)	34.84	5.16
Palamau	26 09	27.83	33.91	12.17

AFFINITY : In somatometric and morphological characters the Oraons have similarities with the other Australoid tribes of India, which is also supported by the percentage distribution of different finger print patterns. As regards blood groups their affinity cannot be ascertained either with the Australoids or with the Mundaris, but that they have undergone considerable Munda admixture, at least in the Palamau district is almost certain. The tradition of their common origin with the Māle of Rajmahal, a representative of the Australoid, has been discarded by Sarkar (1938, 1942-'43).

Linguistically, their language (Kurukh) has similarity with Tamulian language and these two languages have

been grouped by Bishop Caldwell under the generic name Dravidian. S. C. Roy also is of the opinion that their original home was somewhere in the Deccan. However, at present the Oraons are a highly expanding tribe and they have undergone many changes through admixture in the course of their sojourn from south India.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : The Oraons are settled agriculturists. Hunting, fishing and collection of roots, fruits, tubers, etc. are practised in little measure which are at present more recreative than any substantive economic activity ; although such recreations bring some definite variation in their day to day monotony. In former times, in their home land (Chotanagpur) hunting had some economic and more socio-religious importance, but at present its economic importance is lost and it has been reduced to almost a ritualistic activity. Besides these, a good many of them have migrated to neighbouring districts of Bihar, in Bengal and Assam as labourers in the mines, jungles and tea gardens and also as day-labourers.

They cultivate varieties of paddy, millet, pulses and oil-seed. For cultivation of different crops they distinguish different types of soil on the basis of position and fertility. The cultivable land is primarily divided into two classes viz., *tanr* or up-lands, and *don* or lowlands. The *don* land is further sub-divided into three categories viz., *taria* or upper portion of the slope, *chaunra* or intermediate portion, and *kudar* or bottom of the slope. In order of fertility the *tanr* stands highest. In *tanr* land they cultivate coarse rice (*gora*), millet (*marua*), pulses and oil-seed (*surguja*), usually in rotation. In *don* lands they produce, in the main, two classes of paddy, *bhadai* rice which is reaped in October

and *aghuni* rice which is reaped in Nov-Dec. *Bhadai* rice is grown in *taria-don* land or *chaunra-don* land and *aghuni* rice, the best variety, is grown in *kudar-don* land.

The fertility of the soil of the country in general is poor and requires manuring for a good harvest. Oraon farmers use indigenous manures as, cowdung, mud of of the old tanks and *karanj* flower mixed with ashes. These manures are good in themselves but much of their value is lost due to prolonged exposure to sun and wind and also a good portion is washed off by rain.

A good harvest depends a lot on a good system of irrigation, which is very little in the Oraon country. There are few embankments for storage of rain water and irrigation channels leading to the fields, some tanks and wells, but these are siginficantly meagre relative to the requirement. Of course in almost every village there is a pond or some water-logged area, which dries up in summer, from which water is drawn by lever system (*latha-kundi*). Thus an Oraon farmer, like almost all other farmers of this country, has to depend ultimately on rain fall.

The Oraon country being very rugged and hilly tract, water ways and natural lakes are few ; and they generally practise fishing by bare hands, traps and by small nets.

Oraons are skilled hunters and in earlier days hunting played important role in their socio-economic and religious life. They used to hunt collectively during three big annual hunting festivals. These were *Phagu sendra* (Spring hunt), *Bishu sendra* (Summer hunt) and *Jaith sendra* (hunting in the month of Jaistha). To participate in these hunting festivals was a socio-religious duty for an able Oraon male.

In the economic activity division of labour on the basis of sex is observed. Women are prohibited from

hunting and ploughing, hoeing, levelling and irrigation—these are exclusively male business. But they do sowing, transplanting, harvesting, winnowing, husking and fishing, collection of fuel, vegetables, etc.

The common livestock of the Oraons consist of cows, bullocks and buffaloes for purpose of cultivation ; and goats, pigs and fowls for sacrifice and food.

IMPLEMENTS : The principal implement of their main economic activity (i.e., cultivation) is plough (*hār*) which is made of *sāl* wood, the plough-share (*phār*) being made of a straight piece of iron, about a foot long and an inch broad. An yoke is fitted with the beam of the plough with the help of leather straps (*nādhā*)—the yoke along with the plough being harnessed on a pair of bullocks. Among other implements there are, the harrow (*pāttā*) which is a narrow piece of wood about two yards long with two holes, fitted to the yoke at the centre with the help of two thin bamboo-strips and is drawn by bullocks ; the leveller (*hāngā*) which is a large, oblong wooden shovel with two holes on the blade ; the earthmover (*kārhā*) consisting of a wooden plank four feet long and eighteen inches broad which is operated in the same way as the harrow ; the clod-breaker (*dhelphorā*) ; the crow-bar (*sabar*) which is a bar of iron sharpened at one end ; the spade (*kori*) consisting of three parts—a bamboo or wooden handle, an iron socket and a flat steel blade. The other implements of importance are, sickle (*hānsuā*) for reaping paddy ; mortar and pestle (*chanjkgā* and *sāmāth*) for husking paddy grains ; husking lever (*dhenki*) and axe (*tāngā*)

Besides these, they use different kinds of knives—(a) small knives (*ep kanto*), worn by young men at their waists ; (b) bigger knives (*talma kanto*), used

for peeling mangoes ; and (c) still bigger ones (*klo'a kanto)*, used for shaving and hair cutting.

FOOD : Boiled rice is the staple diet of the Oraons, though an ordinary Oraon cannot provide for himself a full diet of rice throughout the year ; at times of scarcity *marua* substitutes rice. Common side-dishes are formed by fried edible leaves (*sāg*) or vegetable curry (*ahra-āmkhi*). Very few can afford to have pulses (*dāl*). If available, they take any and every fish and the flesh of almost all birds and animals except that of the monkey, asses, horses, elephants and the like. Average Oraon eats even the mouse and crow with relish. Of course at present such indiscrimination with regard to food is much modified due to Christianity and Hinduism and other religious cross currents in the life of the Oraons.

Milk and curdled-milk (*dahi*) are taken with much relish, when available. Rice-beer (*hanria* or *illi*) is their favourite intoxicating beverage. It is prepared by fermenting the boiled starch of *marua* and rice with the fermenting catalyst *bichchi* which is made of some vegetable roots mixed with rice-flour. *Hanria* is indispensible in almost all social and religious festivals. Present-day Oraons are more addicted to the distilled liquour than their traditional *hanria*—this addiction has further accentuated their poverty.

The animal, bird, fish or plant which forms the totem of a particular clan, is taboo to the members of that clan. Formerly, when the men of a village would go out on a hunting expedition, it was a prohibition to the villagers to kill any bird or animal until the hunting party returned.

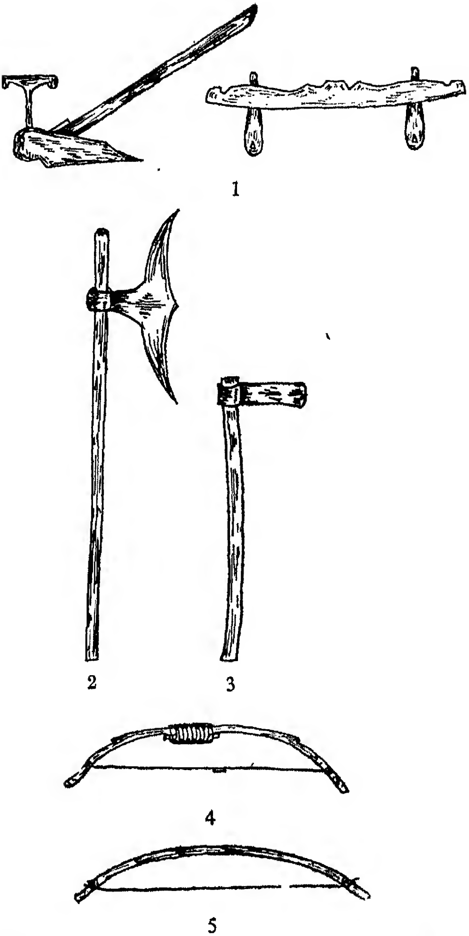
HABITATION : In general an Oraon household consists of two huts each with four low side-walls,

an entrance each and no windows. The bigger hut is divided internally into two unequal compartments—the larger one serving as the bed-room, dining-room and kitchen, while the smaller one serves as the store for grains, utensils and implements. One corner of the larger compartment is often partitioned by bamboo-fencing which serves as fowl-pen. A small verandah is often attached to the bigger hut which is used as the sitting place and also as sleeping-place for old men. The smaller hut is used as cattle-shed and the verandah attached to it as the pig-sty. Well-to-do Oraons have often more than two huts, an open space inside and at the back, a kitchen-garden.

The floor and the walls of the huts are made of mud while the roof is made of tiles or grass-thatch. The floors are built slightly above the ground-level.

An Oraon village (*basti*) is the conglomeration of a number of huts arranged at random. The alleys in between the huts serve the only communication inside the village. The inside of the *basti* is filthy and repulsive. Almost every family possesses a manure-pit in which is stored all the kitchen-refuse and which emanates the repulsive odour of putrified organic materials. There is no system of drainage of water, and above all there is no latrine inside the village. The sum total of all these has simply made the atmosphere of the village unhealthy.

There is no fortification surrounding the village. A grove outside the village is considered as the seat of the principal village deity—*Chalo Pachcho* or *Sarna Burhiā*, and the grove is known as *jhākrā*. Within the village there is a dancing-ground (*ākhrā*). Besides these other public place of the village is the bachelors' dormitory (*Jonkh Erpā* or *Dhumkuriā*). In earlier



ORAON : 1. Plough and yoke. 2. Battle axe
3. Axe. 4. Pellet bow. 5. Simple bow

times the dormitory was a regular feature in every village but at present it has almost disappeared as a regular feature.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS: The utensils of an Oraon household are very limited, the important ones are brass-plates of two varieties, the *thari*—larger ones, and the *chhipri* the smaller ones ; brass-cups (*dubhas*) for holding vegetable-curries and similar other things, and spherical brass jugs without handle (*lotās*) for holding water. Of kitchen utensils there are, iron spoons (*karchhul*) used for stirring rice, wooden spoons (*dui*) for stirring pulses, vegetables and meat ; earthenware pots (*kāthi*) in which rice is boiled, the *tāoā* in which pulses and vegetable curry are cooked, the *chukha* used for drinking water, the *āri* or *gharā* for drawing and carrying water, the *bisali* which is a bigger *āri* in which paddy is boiled before husking, or is used for storing grains of daily consumption.

Among the baskets mention may be made to *chhatkā* which is a very large basket in which paddy is stored, the *dilingi* and *uddu* are the smaller varieties of *chhatkā.*

Besides these, there are other minor potteries such as for holding oil, lampstand, lids of other vessels ; and plates and cups made of *sāl* leaves.

Among the furniture, the average Oraon house consists of a few mats (*pitri*) which the women weave and these mats provide the only bed. The comparatively well-to-do Oraons may afford to have one or more charpoys (*khāttis*), each with a coarse web of string supported on a rude four-legged wooden frame. For sitting they have wooden planks (*kāndos*) or similar seats made of straw (*busuhi kāndo*).

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION : In the village an ordinary adult Oraon male wears a piece of cotton cloth about a foot in breadth and nine to fifteen

feet in length. It is wound round the waist and is then passed between the thighs once tightly and then loosely, the ends being allowed to hang down the waist. The piece of cloth is known as *kāreā*. Ordinarily, women wear round the waist a piece of cloth (*khānriā*) about two feet wide and six feet long, which reaches down to the knees. The upper part of the body is left uncovered. Children go about naked till their third or fourth year after which a male child wears a small *karea*, and a female child a *putti*, a small strip of cloth. Unmarried girls wear waist-cloths (*gaji*) of short dimension. Old men and poorer people wear only a *bhāyoa* which is a short and narrow strip of cloth about a foot wide and three feet long.

On festive occasions a young Oraon wears a *karea* with two ornamented figures interwoven with red thread and also a number of small round tassels of red thread hanging from the ends. In such occasions they also cover the upper part of the body with a cotton sheet called, *pechhouri*. Women use a sheet-covering (*pudhnā*) in festive occasions. Women of well-to-do families sometimes wear borderless *sāri* one end of which is used to cover the trunk.

Formerly they used to wear clothes made of home-spun cotton. At present, however, on account of spread of market, conversion to Christianity and culture contacts through education and service, they use mill-made clothes and wear sari, dhuty, shirt, blouse, etc.

Oraon women are very fond of ornaments. The most common metal for ornaments is brass or bell-metal, next in order comes silver and iron. Gold ornaments are rare. In forearm and arm they wear a number of heavy bracelets (*bālās*). In neck they wear *hānsuli* by the side of which bead necklets are strung on coloured threads ; *chāndoāmālā* or necklaces made of silver coins

or imitation coins strung together. In ear three perforations are made length-wise—at the lowest they wear a rolled up palm leaf, dyed red with lac (*bindio*), in the middle *bich kāni* and in the upper one, *upar kāni*. On the fingers they wear as many ornaments as they can get—*lohra-muddi, gouria-muddi, sonra-muddi*, etc. On the ankle is worn an anklet (*painrā*) by the bride at wedding. On the second toe is worn three brass-rings (*jhutia*) and an iron ring (*kātri*). Besides, they use hairpins (*khongso*) and an wooden comb (*bagirka*) in the bun ; and on the right nose, *nāk mutri*.

Besides ornaments women like to tattoo their arms, feet, forehead, temples and back. The designs are, in the main, parallel zig-zag lines, straight lines, and floral designs. When a girl is seven or eight, three parallel lines are punctured on her forehead, and three on each of her temples. Four or five years later, similar punctures are made on the upper part of her arms, on her back and chest, and on her legs. Oraon males also tattoo their person but not as extensively as the females.

Social Organisation :

DIVISIONS : The tribe is divided into a number of exogamous totemic clans (*gotra*). A clan is further subdivided into a number of maximal lineages which are again subdivided into a number of major lineages which are composed of ultimate social units viz., families. Politically, the tribe is divided into a number of territorial segments, the *parhas*. The *parhas* are divided into a number of villages—the smallest political units.

CLAN : The clans are totemic i. e., they are named after birds, fish, animals, vegetables, plants and

minerals. S. C. Roy is of the opinion that formerly, most of the totem names have been supplied by the fauna and flora of their past and present habitat and a few new names have been added after they have gathered knowledge of agriculture and the use of metals. Some of the totem names may be cited for example : *toppo*—the bird wood-pecker ; *minz*—a kind of fish ; *lakra*—tiger ; *tirkey*—young mice ; *khess*—papdy ; *panna*—iron ; and *bek*—salt. An Oraon generally observes taboo regarding the totem—he should not eat, use, moiest or destroy the totem. However, the totems are never worshipped. But there is evidence that in the past some of the totems at least were regarded as fetishes in hunting and war.

They do not consider the totem objects as their ancestors, but they believe that these totems have helped or protected the human ancestors of the clans, or been of some service to them. However, the members of a particular clan believe to have descended from a common ancestor and hence, marriage between themselves is prohibited. Besides regulation of marriage the clan organisation of the Oraons, at present, has lost all other functions—economic, political and social. The clan name descends from father to son.

FAMILY : A family is constituted of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. Formerly, joint or extended families were common, but at present simple family is the prevalent type.

Within the family there is division of labour on the basis of sex and age. But a strong sense of cooperation is noticed between the sexes with respect to their principal economic activity. Women are tabooed from hunting and ploughing, otherwise in all other activities they help their men. Still, within the family the husband exercises supreme authority.

KINSHIP : The Oraon system of kinship terminology is a kind of classificatory system which implies the application of the same term in addressing most, though not all, persons of the same sex and generation. Thus, the term *bā* (=father) not only means one's own male parent but also to all others whom that parent would call brother ; similarly, the term *āiyo* (=mother) not only applies to one's own female parent but also to all whom his father might marry ; and similar is the case with regard to the terms *bābu* (=son) and *māi* (=daughter). In certain cases, however, a distinction is made in addressing the elder and younger members of the same generation. It may be noted that *'em'*, *'eng'* or *'ing'* prefixed to a term of relationship signifies 'my', e.g. *embās*=my father, *ingio*=my mother, and the like. Similarly the prefix *tān* signifies 'his', *ming* signifies 'thy' and *nāng*, 'ours'.

There exists certain rules of avoidance between certain affinal kins. Avoidance prevails between a man and his younger brother's wife ; and his wife's elder sisters. Such persons cannot even call one another by name. A man's younger brother's wife and his wife's elder sisters are denoted by the term *baenali*, and a woman's husband's elder brothers and her younger sisters' husbands are *baenala*. A less rigourous type of avoidance is noticed between a man and his son's wife.

Joking relationship exists between grandparent and grandchildren. S. C. Roy observes that there are reasons to believe in the former existence of a system of marriage or union between such persons, because it is considered as a trivial offence if such persons (in classificatory sense) are found to have illicit sex-relation. Such joking relation also exists between a man and his elder brothers' wives, and his wife's younger sisters who are considered potential spouses.

MARRIAGE: The prevalent form of marriage is monogamy, though in case of barrenness of the first wife an Oraon man may take a second wife.

Marriage between individuals belonging to the same totemic clan is strictly forbidden. They believe that such marriages bring general calamity to the tribe as a whole. Besides, marriage is prohibited between near relatives, such as brother and sister, parallel cousins, and the like. Marriage is not permitted between the members of two families who have entered into a ceremonial friendship. As a rule, marriage between the parties of the same village is not favoured which is probably a reminiscent of the time when an Oraon village group was identical with a totemic clan group. Cross-cousins are also not considered as spouses, but that in former times such marriage was in regular practice, is indicated by the same kinship term applied to one's mother's brother and father's sister's husband. Marriage with a non-Oraon is punished by excommunication until the non-Oraon partner is given up.

The usual method of getting a wife is by purchase which means that the bridegroom is to pay a sum of money to the bride's father as bride-price. Negotiation is done by a man who is generally a friend of the bridegroom's parents. Preliminary talks between the two interacting parties are conveyed through the go-between (*āguā*).

Boys who are unable to pay the bride-price and bear other expenditures of marriage, resort to marriage by service. In such cases the prospective grooms serve their fathers-in-law for one or two years after which they can marry the daughters of their masters—and the service-bond terminates there. Sometimes a sonless Oraon gives his daughter to a man who agrees to remain in his house as a son to work for him in old

age. In such cases the groom (*ghardijoā*) is not required to make any payment for his bride ; over and above, he inherits the property of his father-in-law.

Widow remarriage is widely practised in Oraon society. They are free to marry any man, generally a widower, divorced or deserted person, outside her father's clan. A man has the privilege to marry his deceased elder brother's widow, but the privilege cannot be enforced against her will.

A man may divorce his wife if the wife habitually runs away from his house, or she neglects her household duties, or she steals and sells grains etc. from the house, or it is proved that she possesses an evil eye (*najur*), or she is caught in adultery or she is barren or lunatic, or she is converted to Christianity. On the other hand the wife has also the right to divorce her husband if he is lunatic, impotent or is converted to Christianity, or if he physically tortures her. No special ceremonies or formalities are required to effect a divorce.

The sexual life of the Oraon cannot be characterised as even moderately chaste. Premarital sex license prevails widely and is generally overlooked by the community until it leads to pregnancy when a fine is imposed on the parties, who provide a feast to the elders and are thereby excused from all guilts.

DESCENT & INHERITANCE : The Oraons are patrilineal. A man belongs to the clan of his father and a woman, after marriage, gets into her husband's clan. They are patripotestal i.e., the supreme authority of the family is vested on a male member—the husband.

On the death of the head of the family the property devolves on his sons and in the event of partition, the eldest son receives a slightly larger share than his other brothers. In the absence of any son the property

devolves on nearest family or families of male agnates. If the deceased has left behind a number of sons born of a number of wives, then the sons by the first wife shall each receive a larger share than the sons of the second or later wives ; over and above the eldest son shall get a small area of land in excess to his regular share. If the deceased has left no son of his own but a duly adopted son born of one of his agnates (*bhayad*), then the adopted son will inherit all his property after deducting a suitable portion for the maintenance of the widow or widows. In the case that the deceased has left no son—own or adopted—but a *ghardijoa*, then the widow is entitled to the administration and usufruct of the property so long as she lives in the house and does not remarry.

THE VILLAGE ORGANISATION : An Oraon village consists of two classes of Oraon inhabitation, viz., the Bhuinhars and Jeth-Raiyats. The former are the descendants of the first settlers who cleared the forests and founded the village. The Jeth-Raiyats are subsequent settlers who came to the village and settled on some *khunt* (family stock) land to which they were related by marriages. Besides these Oraon families there are in each village a Gorait family, one or two Ahir families, a Lohar family, and occasionally, a few families of Ghasis, Chik Baraiks, Mahalis, Turis and Kumhars. The Goraits carry messages to the land-lords and to the village headman, act as village drummers on ceremonial occasions, make combs, card cotton and Gorait females tattoo Oraon girls. The Lohars are blacksmiths who make and repair the ploughshares and other tools and implements. The duty of the village Ahir is to graze and look after the cattle of villagers. For their services the Gorait, Lohar and Ahir are annually paid a measure of paddy on the basis of their amount of work. The

Ghasis play music at wedding and other social festivals, and their women act as midwives and nurses. The Mahalis and Turis are basket-makers and the Kumhars make earthenware pots. Thus an Oraon village is organised on the collective economic activity of these communities and their total interaction with the Oraon villagers.

AUTHORITY: In each village there are three Oraon officers viz., *Baiga* or *Pāhān*, *Pujār*—assistant of *Pāhān*, and *Māhāto*. The *Pāhān* is the village priest who propitiates the village deities and keep the villagers safe from the unwanted attention of the supernatural beings. The *Pāhān* is helped by the *Pujār* in his priestly duties. The *Māhāto* is the secular headman who helps the landlords in collecting rent and settling disputes regarding rent. The *Māhāto* also presides over the village panchayat constituted by the village elders. The authority of this panchayat is supreme in all matters—social or religious—concerning the villagers' complaints regarding marriage, theft, assault, witchcraft and disputes regarding partition of property which are braught to the *Māhāto* and the *Pāhān* who call the panchayat through the Gorait fixing the time and place of the meeting. Punishments enforced by the panchayat consist of fine, threshing, ex-communication, and sometimes banishment from the village.

The *Pāhān* is the central figure in the Oraon village. There are evidences to show that formerly the *Pāhān* discharged both his duties and those of the *Māhāto* and there was no *Māhāto*. The *Pāhān* holds his office for three years after which a new man from *Pāhān-khunt* is selected by the supernatural method of *sup-chalan*. In some villages this office is hereditary. The *Pāhān* enjoys some rent-free *Pāhānel* land as remuneration of his service. In majority of the villages the *Māhāto* is elected once in three years from the *Māhāto-khunt*,

by the villagers assembled at the *ākhrā* (dancing ground). The newly elected *Māhāto* is then recognised by the landlords who present him a turban (*pagri*). The *Māhāto* also enjoys some rent-free land attached to the post during his tenure of service. The *Pujār* is also elected from the *Pujar-khunt*, once in three years, and he also enjoys some rent-free land.

PARHA FEDERATION : Oraon political organisation has developed beyond the mere village into *Parha* federation. A *parha* comprises a number of adjacent villages, the number varies from *parha* to *parha*, it may be seven, nine, twenty or even thirty. Each *parha* has a distinct name, but generally they are called by number. The object of such federation is the protection of the federal villages against human and non-human foes. Each *parha* has its particular territory where it defends its agricultural lands, village sites, forest tracts, grazing lands, water supplies and fishing pools. All the villages in a *parha* are subject to the authority of the *parha* panchayat and each village is allotted a special function and the villages are so named, such as the *raja* village, the *dewan* village, the *panrey* village, the *kotwar* village and the *praja* villages. The officers of the *parha* are either officers of the respective villages or a *bhuinhar* elder of the same.

The *parha* panchayat decides cases regarding breach of certain social and magico-religious taboos that affect the whole *parha* or the tribe. It also decides inter-village disputes, and cases arising out of sexual union between an Oraon and a non-Oraon, and any case of incest. The *parha* generally sits once a year during *jeth-jatra*, just after the great summer hunt. It generally sits in a complaint's village where the *Pāhān*, the *Māhāto*, the *Pujar* and a few *bhuinhari* elders from each village assembles under a big tree. The officers sit on a sheet

of cloth made for the purpose, take evidence and decide the case. The complaint's village supply refreshment to the assembled guests.

DORMITORY ORGANISATION: Many Oraon villages possess an indigenoûs institution for the training of the youth, known as *Jonkh-Erpa* in Oraon language, and Dhumkuria or Dhangar-kuria in Hindustani. It is the bachelors' dormitory where all the unmarried young males of the village sleep at night and pass a better part of the day. According to S. C. Roy it is a relic of the hunting stage of the Oraon society when it served an effective organisation for foodquest, and an useful seminar for training young men in their social duties and in socio-religious observances to secure success in hunting and augment the procreative power of the young men so as to increase the number of hunters in the tribe.

The *Dhumkuria* house is an ordinary hut, a little bigger in size, with four mud-walls, one door way and no window. It is generally thatched over with wild grass or roofed with tiles. In it the village bachelors sleep at night on plam-leaf mats presented annually by the maidens of the village. Adjacent to this house is the *ākhrā* or village dancing-ground.

A boy enters into this organisation at the age of eleven or twelve. New boys are admitted once in every three years, on the day of new-moon in the month of Magh (Jan-Feb), and they are called as *puna jonkhars*, or *dhangars* of the lowest grade. The next senior members are known as *majh-turia jonkhar* or *dhangars* of the intermediate grade ; and the oldest *dhangars* who belong to the highest grade are known as *koha-jonkhar*. The duration of membership of each of the first two grades is three years, whereas the third category

dhangars are supposed to continue as members till their marriage.

Discipline among *Dhumkuria* fraternity is maintained through two officers, annually selected by the village elders assembled for the purpose in an open space near a *basti*, in the month of Chaitra or Baisakh. They are *Dhangar-Mahato* and *Dhangar-Kotwar* who are the members of the eldest group. The *Dhangar-Mahato* has to instruct the boys in social and religious duties. He is generally the ablest boy. The *Dhangar-Kotwar* is the assistant of the *Dhangar-Mahato*, over and above, he is responsible for the regular attendance of the boys, he has to attend the *jatrās* and the dances and also to see that the boys are properly dressed and decorated for the purpose. He may punish the disobidient and unwilling boys by lashing with a straw-whip (*bindi*) which is the insignia of his office. An elderly person is selected to look after the morals of the maidens of the village who is known as *Pelo-Kotwar*. These officers are changed every three years and new officers are appointed through the ceremony of *Mukhia-handi*, the drinking of rice-beer in the honour of the leaders.

The *dhangars* are to perform a number of duties during their stay in the *Dhumkuria*. They are to work in individual houses when there is wedding or any feast in the house. There they act as cooks and caterers. They also look after the comforts of the guests who have been accommodated in the dormitory. The younger boys massage the legs of the elder ones or of any villager who may come to the house for the purpose. When a man requires the services of the *dhangars* for thatching his house or for any other similar purpose, he is to apply for the same to the *Dhangar-Mahato* at whose order the boys do the job. They receive something in remuneration which is spent either in

purchasing musical instruments or in feasting. The *Dhumkuria* boys are to perform the magical ceremony of driving the spirit that causes cattle disease. A day or two before the annual *hārborā* ceremony, all the boys of the dormitory go out in a body, after breakfast, to drive away ceremonially the birds that eat up crops.

In imitation to the bachelors' house there is also a maidens' dormitory (*Pel-Erpa*), where the young unmarried girls sleep at night. This is not a public building, but generally the house of some widow. Once in every three years a fresh batch of maidens are admitted into the *Pel-Erpa*. Like bachelors, the maidens are also divided into three grades according to age. The most intelligent of the oldest maidens is regarded as the leader of the dormitory, sometimes called the *Barki-dhangrin*. She, in cosultation with the other girls of her class, directs and controls the inmates.

During the stay in the dormitory, each maiden is required every year to plait a strip of palm-leaf-mat (*patia*) about six inches wide and as long as the length of the bachelors' hall. All the strips thus plaited every year are made over to the *Dhumkuria* boys who stitch together the different strips covering the entire hall. Besides, the maidens also serve in wedding or in other works in the house or field of the villagers on request. On the morning following the *karam* festival in the month of Bhadra (August) the maidens present sprouting barley-seeds which they have prepared in the dormitory for seven days, to the bachelors. After this presentation both the boys and the maidens dance together in the *ākhrā*. The belief behind this ritual is probably to increase the fertility of the youth.

There is considerable sexual license between the members of the two dormitories.

DEATH & FUNERAL: The Oraon generally cremate the dead bodies. But if a person dies after sowing and before harvest, the body is provisionally buried which is cremated afterwards.

When a death occurs the female relatives burst in loud lamentation and wailing after which the body is taken out of the hut and is placed in the courtyard with its head to the south. The door of the hut is shut with ashes strewn on the floor until the funeral party comes back. Then the corpse is treated with cold water. A basket is kept by the side of the dead body into which paddy, offered by the relatives and the fellow villagers, is collected.

The dead body is then laid on a bier (*sarha*) made of two wooden poles and a few cross-bars, and is carried by the women only to the cremation ground (*mashān*). Relatives of both the sexes and the villagers follow the procession. At the cremation ground, all the paddy collected in the basket is placed on the ground at the spot over which the head of the corpse rests. The corpse is then placed on the pyre with the head pointing towards the south. Then the female relatives pour oil over the corpse and put some *usnā* rice and copper coins into the mouth, and rice-beer is dropped into the mouth of the corpse by each relative. After these rituals a son or, in his absence, some other near relative waves some fired straw round the mouth of the corpse and this fire is set to the wood of the funeral pyre. Every one present then places a few pieces of wood on the corpse. After setting fire the party goes back to the courtyard of the house where a pit is dug and into which is poured the blood and the beak or the snout of a sacrificed chicken or pig. Then a new earthenware jar is made ready with paintings and garlanded with rice-flour cakes.

Then the women go back to the cremation ground and pick up remnants of the bones of the neck, arms, legs and chest of the deceased with their left hands. Those pieces of charred bones after washing and annointing with turmeric paste, are put into the jar along with some copper coins and an effigy of *kusa* grass.

Once in a year, in the mouth of January, the annual *koha benja* (great marriage) or *harbora* (bone drowning) ceremony is performed, when the pots containing the charred bones of the members of a clan are taken by the female relatives followed by the males in a procession, to the clan *kundi* (a stream or pool) where the bones are finally deposited. The pots are snatched by the males from the females and are struck against a slab of stone (*pulkhi*). The souls of the deceaseds of the clan are believed to be admitted into the community of the ancestors (*pachbalars*).

RELIGION : The religious beliefs of the Oraons are of composite order—a blending of the relics of their earlier religion before arriving at Chotanagpur and after mingling with the Mundas and joining in their festivals and acts of public worship. Besides, they have undergone many reformatory movements, such as, different Bhagat movements, Christian movements and Hindu movement. These movements have made considerable shifts in their religious life and many have converted to other religions

The traditional Oraon religion believes in the existence of a supreme deity, the *Dharme*, symbolised by the sun. *Dharme* is considered as the creator and protector of the Oraons. He is regarded as a male, the husband of *Dharti Mātā*, the mother earth. No image or idol of *Dharme* is known. In times of sickness or utter calamity the favour of *Dharme* is sought as the last resort when white fowls and goats are sacrificed to him.

Besides *Dharme* and the Mother-goddess (*Chalo Pachcho*) who are the only benevolent deities, the Oraons recognise a number of evil spirits and malevolent impersonal powers and forces. These spirits are known in the kurukh language as *nād,* which is practically equivalent to the *bhut* of the Hindus. They attempt to conciliate the host of spirits by prayers, offerings and sacrifices and by observing certain taboos. Some chief spirits are *Darhā, Deshwali nād, Khunta nād, Barandā, Addi* or *Erpa nād, Chandi, Churel, Muā,* and many others.

They believe in the potentially beneficient ancestral spirits. The spirits of the departed ancestors are regarded as forming one clan-group with their living descendants on earth. They believe that the ancestors appear and talk with them in dreams, and they always keep their affectionate eye on their descendants so that evil spirits may not cause harm to them.

It may be said that Oraon religion is primarily concerned with the ancestral and certain other disembodied souls, and Nature spirits and deities. Their religion is a system of animism or spiritism set on a background of a vague animatism. In magic, their attitude is mainly one of defiance of and domination over impersonal mysterious powers to expel the evil or compel the natural or supernatural forces in the production of desired favourable conditions such as, good weather and rain.

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9

THE AO NAGA

INTRODUCTION : The Ao Naga forms an important and the most populous member of the Naga group of tribes in Nagaland, with a population of 55,866 souls, according to 1961 census. It occupies a portion of the Naga Hills bounded by the Dikhu river on the southeast, the edge of the plains of Sibsagar district of Assam on the north west, the Tuensang district on the north east and the Kohima district on the south-west. The Ao Nagas are most concentrated in the district of Mokokchung though they are found in other parts of the state and outside.

Habitat

The tract of land inhabited by the Ao Naga lies between 26°12′ and 26°45′ North Latitudes and 94°18′ and 94°50′ East Longitudes. Whole of the territory forms one mass of hills having no level regions. The hills gradually rises from the low ranges near the Brahmaputra valley and there are a few peaks 5000′ above the sea level. The territory is made up of roughly three parallel ridges running in a northeasterly direction. Of these the one nearest to the Dikhu is the Langbangkong, the second is Changkikong and the third being the Chapvukong which is nearest to the Sibsagar district.

There are numerous streams in the valleys between the ridges and these drain the territory into the Brahmaputra. The chief of these streams are the Disai, the Jhanzi

and the Dikhu. These streams have however little practical value so far as navigation is concerned.

The soil in some places is composed of clay, in others of sand and in many places it is exceedingly rocky and unfit for cultivation.

The climate is generally cold in the winter and cool in other seasons. The higher hills are healthy. In the rainy season the valleys and lower ranges become malarious. The temperature ranges between 40° and 88°F. The annual rainfall at Mokokchung is about 100."

In their natural state the hills are covered with evergreen forest much of which are lost to the activities of the Aos. The vegetation is both dense and varied. Orchids, rhododendron, begonias, tree fern, ground fern, mosses, creepers and vines abound in great variety and luxuriance. In the higher ridges oak and pine are seen. There are varieties of wild fruits such as banana, mango, crabapple, fig, lime, orange, raspberry, strawberry, cherry and others.

Wild elephants are common and do much harm to the ricefields. Wild pig, bear, leopard and tiger are also found. A kind of stocky short-legged cattle or bison locally called *mithan*, is found in fairly large number. Deer is also found. Black gibbon (*Hylobates hoolock*) and monkeys (*Macaca mulatta* and *M. assamensis*) are freqnently met with. The other animals consist of some small Carnivores, rat, squirrel, hornbill, kite, and some large birds of eagle family. Snakes of different sizes and varieties, mostly non-venomous, are found.

Most of the villages are accessible by walking. Motorable roads are now-a-days built in many places. The district headquarters, Mokokchung, is connected by road to the N. F. Railway.

Physical features :

Skin colour of the Ao Naga varies from very light yellowish brown to dark brown, the common colour being light yellow brown. There is often found a reddish flush on the face. Hair colour is generally black in the adult though dark brown hair is also met with in a considerable proportion. The colour of hair in the children is usually brown. Hair form varies from stretched to deep wavy, the most frequent form being flat wavy. Predominant colour of eye is dark brown. Either complete Mongolian or inner epicanthic eyefold is present in the eye. The axis of eye is usually oblique and the opening, slit-like. Cheek is prominent ; both frontal and lateral juts are met with. Lips are usually moderately thick and thin lips are found in a large proportion. Alveolar prognathism is slight. Beard and body hair are scanty. Chin is usually oval.

Cephalic Index varies from dolichocephaly to hyper-brachycephaly and the brachycephaly prevails. The average cephalic index has been found to be about 82. Head is usually medium in length and is usually broad. Nose is generally mesorrhine though leptorrhine and platyrrhine noses are also found in substantial frequencies in both the sexes. Nasion depression is shallow in majority of the cases. Nasal bridge is generally concave. Face is generally medium though long faces are found in a considerable proportion. Stature is predominantly medium and tall stature is found in a large proportion. The average stature lies in the border line of medium and tall. The Ao shows the highest proportion (47. 4%) of blood group O, the frequencies of A and B are equal (22.8%)

AFFINITY : From the analysis of the physical characteristics it is evident that Ao Naga predominantly

possesses the Mongoloid racial element and they may be included within the Classic Mongoloid type. In physical characters the Ao shows close similarity with the other Naga tribes of this area and also with the Mongoloid peoples of Burma and its neighbourhood. They however possess a dolichocephalic leptorrhine element most probably of Mediterranean origin.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : Cultivation is the main occupation of the Ao Naga. The method of cultivation is locally called *jhum* cultivation. Blocks of jungle are felled and are allowed to dry. These are then burnt. The ground is then dug over and the seeds sown. After two or three successive crops the land is abandoned for about ten years usually the whole village cultivates paddy in one block. In case of very large villages, each *khel* cultivates in a block. The area is selected by the elders and every householder has land of his own for the year. The clearing of jungle is done in the middle of the winter season when friends and neighbours help each other. The jungle is left to dry till the end of February or the beginning of March and then it is fired. After the burning operation is complete, each householder constructs his field-house at a convenient place within one's plot. The site is selected with care as on this site will be his place of sacrifice, his threshing floor and in this house he and his family will eat their midday meals during the operations in the field. From sowing to reaping the Aos remain busy in keeping down the weeds. Harvesting is done with a small sickle, the stalk is being cut short and collected in a basket slung on the back of the reaper. Both men and women take part in the operations. The grains are separated by trampling and cleared by

winnowing with a fan made of bomboo splits. The grains are then carried to the village and stored in granaries.

Besides paddy the entire field may be devoted to an annual variety of cotton. Millets are seldom grown. Maize is grown along the boundaries of fields. Taro is occasionally produced. Chillies are also grown.

The Aos do not show much enthusiasm for hunting. Deer is caught by digging pitfalls at the bottom of which long bamboo spikes, *panji*, are fixed in order to impale any animal falling in. For elephants iron spikes are used. The holes are loosely filled with soft soil. If an elephant trod on one of these iron spikes, the iron would go right through the sole when it may be killed at ease with spear. Another way of dealing with an elephant is to hang a weighted spear over its path. The release of the spear is controlled with a string which passes across the path. In passing when an animal touches the string the spear is released and falls on it. This method of dead-fall trap is used to terrify an elephant rather than to kill it.

Solitary tusker boar is tracked down and killed with spear. Herds of wild pig are ringed with great skill and enthusiasm. Tigers and leopards are also ringed. A leopard is sometimes trapped. In this case a long low shed is made by fixing stakes firmly into the ground and lashing them together at the top. One of the ends is closed with stakes and at the other a heavy wooden door is suspended. Two compartments are made inside the shed. In the rear compartment a goat is placed as a bait. The leopard enters the front compartment in an attempt to catch the goat when it releases a catch and drops the heavy door behind it. Small box-traps with falling doors are often made for catching monkeys in the field. The traps are baited with cucumber or such other things. Nooses with

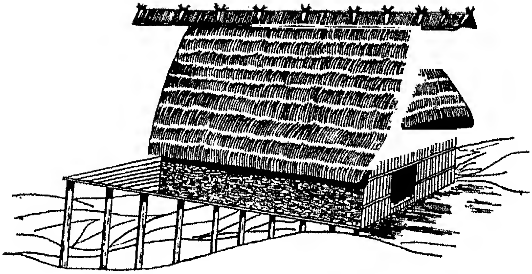
baits are used for catching birds. Bird line is also used.

Fishing is effected by poisoning the stream. The poison employed is usually a type of creeper. Walnut leaves are also used. The creepers or the walnut leaves are pounded and are mixed in the barricaded portion of the stream. The fishes begin to flounder to the top of water when they are caught.

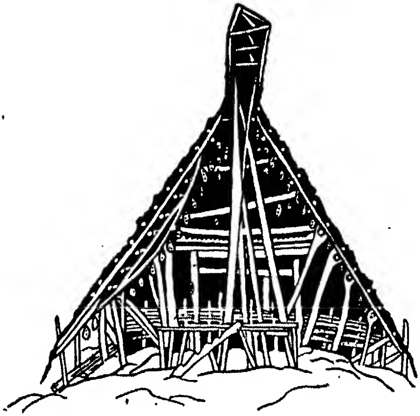
LIVESTOCK : The domesticated animals of the Aos consist of a few *mithans*, a large number of common cattle, goats, pigs and dogs. All of them are kept for their meat. Goat's hair is also used for decorative purposes. A few hunting dogs are kept who are fairly well treated and well fed. Cats are occasionally kept. Fowls increase and multiply without much care being taken of them.

WEAPONS AND IMPLEMENTS : The chief weapons of offence are the *dao* and spear. The *dao* is the indispensable companion of an Ao throughout his life. It is used in a large number of domestic works as well as in war. The blade is about 9" long and 5" broad at the top. The back makes practically a right angle with the top which is straight. The blade is only about an inch broad at the butt end. So it may be described as a right-angled triangle with the cutting edge forming the longest side. The cutting edge is slightly curved outward and is ground on one side only. The blade ends in a long iron tang which is firmly bound with cane into a bamboo haft some sixteen inches long. The *dao* is carried in a wooden holder with a slit long enough to take the blade and narrow enough to prevent the haft from slipping through. The holder is tied to a waist girdle.

The Ao spear-head is lozenge shaped and ordinarily it is small and squat. The shaft is about six feet long.

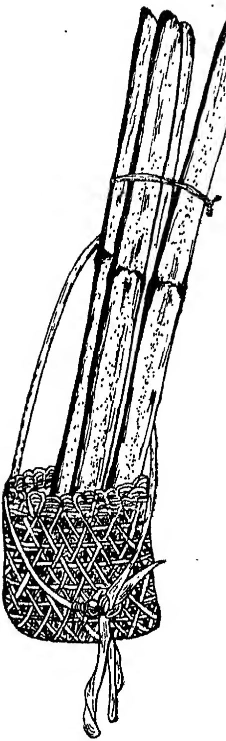


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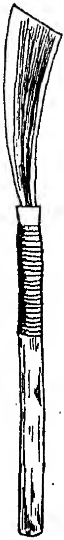


2

AO NAGA : 1. A typical hut
2. Front view of the *morung*



3



4



5

AO NAGA : 3. Bamboo water cotainers in a basket.
4. *Dao*
5. Spear

The favourite wood for plain shaft is a kind of sago palm. The ceremonial spears have long heads often 18″ in length and have inferior qualities of shaft. The shafts of these spears are decorated with goat's hair. There are three main types, in two of which the shaft is decorated with red goat's hair and these may be carried by any warrior. The third variety is ornamented with long goat's hair at the posterior half of the shaft and may only be carried by an old man who has taken heads.

The simplest type of spear is simply a sharpened bamboo which is carried at pig and tiger hunts. There is a type of spear made wholly of one piece of iron. There are two simple missile weapons one of which is a piece of thick heavy bamboo, slightly more than a foot long. The ends are cut at a slant leaving a sharp edge. It was thrown at an attacking force in the hope that it would glance of a man's shield and wound the next man in his side. The other is similar to the first but has a long projection left at one end to form a handle. These were hurled from the look-outs in the trees on the heads of any party attacking the gate in a whirling motion.

Cross-bow is sometimes used for shooting monkeys and small games. Plain bamboo bows are also used to shoot birds. The arrows and bolts made of bamboo are discharged with this.

The sole defensive weapon of the Ao is the shield which is made either of leather or strong bamboo matting. The hide for war-shields was obtained from wild buffalo. The biggest type of hide shields .were used only in defending a village. The ordinary leather shield measures about three feet long and one and a half feet broad. It is square at the two ends and has a prominent ridge down the centre. There is a bamboo handle in the centre at the back to which is also

attached a small head-band for carrying the shield on the march. The ordinary bamboo shield is circular in shape with a conical projection at the centre of the front. A much smaller variety, which would not be in the way in thick jungles, is used in raids.

FIRE : The hearth is kept burning in the living room of a house. To make fire safety-matches are generally used now-a-days though old methods of fire-making are still found. Fire is made with bamboo fire-thong and with hard stone and iron. In case of fire-thong, the end of a dry stick is split and a stone is inserted. Tinder consisting of fine shavings or cotton wool or some such thing is put on the ground and the fork of the stick is held firmly on it with the foot. The operator slips a bamboo thong under the fork and holding one end in either hand pulls it rapidly backwards and forwards. In less than half a minute the tinder catches fire and the thong chars through. In the second method tinder is held against the hard stone and the edge of the stone is struck a glancing blow with a small piece of iron. For tinder the inner coating of bark of a certain palm is usually used.

FOOD : Rice is the staple food of the Aos. They like fish and meat. But when one does not get these contents oneself with chillies, salt and wild leaves. They take beef, pork, fowl, dog, birds, crab, wasp grub etc. Meat or vegetable is boiled separately from the rice with salt and a liberal addition of chillies. They do not take tiger, leopard, gibbon, monkey, civet, eagle, hawk and numerous others. In addition to these restrictions they also observe certain food taboo with respect to the clans. Rice-beer (*madhu*) is generally taken in large quantity. Betel is also taken by many where it is easily available. Tobacco is generally smoked and often opium too. Various kinds of pipes are in use.

VILLAGE : The Ao villages are generally large with an average population of about 650. These are usually situated on the highest point of long ranges. Every village is surrounded by a belt of bamboo clumps and light jungle. The main path approaching the village gate is often paved with stones. The village had formerly elaborate defence. At each end of a village there had been gates with great wooden door made out of a single piece of wood. On either side of the village there were strongly built fences of wooden stakes. There were *panji* filled ditches outside the fence. Look-out platforms were constructed in convenient trees near the gates to observe the enemies. Now-a-days only the relics of the defences are seen in some villages.

Near each gate but inside the fence stands a *morung* (*arichu*), a large building often over fifty feet long and twenty feet broad, with a front gable thirty feet above the ground. It is both a guard house and club house, and it plays an important part in the social life of the village. Two types of *morung* are found among the Ao, the western type and the eastern type, the former being larger and more elaborate. A *morung* is rebuilt every six years and is repaired once in a year. The building of a *morung* is associated with much ceremonies.

Near each *morung* there is a wardrum which is a striking specimen of Ao handiwork. It should be, however, accurately called a xylophone, made out of a huge log sometimes 37′ long and 14′ in girth. It is hollowed out through a long slit running along the length of the body of the drum. One end is carved to represent buffalo's head. In beating the drum the *morung* boys line up along its length and drum it with wooden dumb-bells, the time is given by one of them. The

drum is kept on a raised platfrom of beams and is roofed over to protect it from the weather. In the old days a happy inauguration of a new drum was done with the head of a stranger. In war human heads were invariably first placed on it. Offering of cock or other animals is sometimes made to the drum at the time of draught and calamities.

The path running along the top of the ridge becomes the main street of a village. The houses are closely arranged in rows. The two rows of house on the sides of the main street have their front towards the street, the other rows behind facing uphill. A village is divided into two or more *khels* or *muphu*.

In an open space of a village or near each *khel* in large villages stands a head-tree, usually a specimen of Erythrina arborescens. At its foot round stones are buried. Some of these are considered prosperous, some are the evidences of peace meeting between two villages.

HOUSE : The houses face toward the top of the ridges, the bamboos supporting the platforms. An average house measures 25 ft. in length and 14 ft. in breadth with a platform at the back measuring 11 ft. by 14 ft. The back and the front are square and the roof is of thatching grass or palmleaves. There is a small flying gable in front. Planks are not used, the walls and floor being made of strong bamboo matting, excepting the floor of the outer room which is of beaten earth. In this outer house is kept the rice pounding table, bamboo for holding water and baskets. One corner of the main room is often partitioned off and used as a store room. From the main living room a door leads directly on to the back platform which is used as a general sitting-out place by the family. The variations in structure of the front part of the

house and decoration of roof precisely indicate the status of the owner.

DRESS & PERSONAL DECORATION : An Ao man wears a little apron which consists of a strip of white or blue cloth some four feet long and ten inches wide with a pattern at one end. This strip is folded from the opposite end and sewn, leaving the ornamented end flat to form a flap. It is tied round the waist so that the ornamented portion forms a flap in front. Boys wear nothing till they are five or six years. They are then given a little *dao*-holder and *dao*-belt. But from eight or nine years they wear apron like a grown up man. Everyman wears a body cloth measuring about 4′ 6″ long and 3′ 6″ wide with numerous patterns on it. Some of these patterns proclaim a man's wealth and prowess, some indicate sacrifice of *mithan*, some succes in war, some killing of both men and *mithan*.

A woman's skirt consists of a piece of cloth a yard or a yeard and a half long and twenty to thirty inches wide. It is wrapped round the waist with the top outer corner tucked in just in front of the left hip. It is of dark blue base ornamented with red bands forming either one piece with the rest of the cloth or they may be bands of red embroidery. A little girl's first garment is simply a cotton strung round her waist. At about five years she is given her first skirt. A woman's body cloth is usually white or dark blue and until she has borne her first child it is generally worn round tightly round the body under the armpits.

The most important head dress of an Ao man is a sort of skull cap of bear-skin often ornamented with pairs of small boar's tushes arranged to form circles. It is worn by elderly men who have taken heads. Another type is conical in shape, made of fine red plaited cane and may be worn by any warrior. The

men wear a large number of ornaments such as ear ornaments consisting of brass ring and a trumpet shaped hollow brass rod, necklet of tushes, necklace of beads, armlets of ivory and brass, cowrie gauntlet and several others. Special mention may be made of a necklet of three pairs of tushes and wearing of hornbill's head on the chest which may be worn by the elderly men who collected heads. Besides these cane leggings are worn at the time of dance.

The women have smaller number of ornaments. The most conspicuous ornaments are large brass rings worn at the top of the ante-helix. The other ornaments include ear ornament of polished crystal stones and necklace of bead. A woman may wear one hornbill feather on her head for every *mithan* her husband has sacrificed in her name before she was married.

All Ao girls are tattooed and formerly the Ao warriors who had taken heads had circles tattooed on their backs and with conventional designs on their chests. In case of the girls the pattern usually consists of vertical lines on chin, a chain of lozenges from the throat to the bottom of breastbone, inverted 'V's on the front of the shoulders and belly, lozenges and solid squares on the wrists, lozenges on the lower part of legs and a sort of arrow pattern on the knee. This elaborate ornamentation requires five years to complete, the first being the tattooing of the legs upto the calf when a girl is ten or eleven years old. The tattooing is a sort of *rite de passage.* Skin is punctured with cane thorns by an expert woman and colouring matter is made from the sap of a tree mixed up with rice-beer.

ARTS AND CRAFTS : Spinning and weaving are absolutely the duty of women. The art of dyeing blue and red and that of painting are known, the pigments being made from saps and leaves of certain plants.

Carving of conventional figures on wood is skilfully done by men. The tools are *dao* and chisel made from the tang of *dao.* The carving is done usually in relief and sometimes the figures are painted. They are also expert in basket making. The art of leather work is not perfectly known, the drying in the sun being only known. Stone work and metal work are very little done while pot making is tabooed to them. Musical instruments are practically absent, the only things being buffalo-horn trumpet and bamboo flute.

Social Organisation

DIVISION : The Ao Naga is divided into three language groups : *Chongli, Mongsen* and *Changki.* They represent different immigrants speaking different dialects. Each of these groups has its own set of clans some of which are considered to be allied. The *Chongli* group is divided into three exogamous phratries namely, *Pongen, Lungkam* and *Chami* of which the first is considered to be the seniormost and the last the most junior. The *Mongsen* has also two exogamous phratries, without any specific name while *Changki* has no phratry. Intermarriage between *Chongli* and *Mongsen* groups is rather frequent though neither of them marries in the *Changki* group. It is to be noted, however, that marriage within one's language group is more recommended by the society.

CLAN : Each language group is divided into a number of clans. A phratry is also composed of a number of clans. The clans are strictly exogamous, patrilineal and are ancestral or totemic in nature. A *khel* or *muphu* is composed sometimes of members of the same clan.

FAMILY : Family is the smallest social unit of the Ao Naga and it is generally composed of a man, his

wife and their unmarried children. It is rare to find a married son living with his parents. Most of the domestic works are performed by the woman.

KINSHIP : The classificatory system of relationship is the rule. A man puts all the men of his father's clan and generation into the father-category, those of his own clan and generation into the brother-category, all women of his mother's clan and generation into the mother-category, and so on. Certain relations may not address each other by name. Nobody may address father, mother, uncle, aunt, grand-father, grand-mother, elder brother and elder sister by name. For a man similar prohibition is present for his elder brother's wife and wife's parents and for a woman for her elder sister's husband and her husband's parents. Husband and wife must always address each other by name.

A man is expected to pay respect to his parents-in-law and to his elders. A quarrel with an elder blood relation is believed to entail illness, poor crops and other evils. Reconciliation is necessary and the younger takes the initiative.

VILLAGE ORGANISATION : The village is the most important social, economic and political unit of the Ao Naga. The organisation of the village is based on two main principles. First of these is that all the men of a village are divided into age-groups. Various communal duties are assigned to these age groups. Secondly, the administration of a village is done by a council whose members come from certain age-group. There is nothing corresponding to a hereditary chieftainship and the village is ruled on the most democratic manner. Of these two principles the second may be considered a derived one.

AGE GROUP SYSTEM : The system of age-group may be summarised into that every three years a new group of boys, who are born within this three-year period, enter the *morung.* This is the first age-group. A boy remains a member of the age-group system throughout his life. The communal duties which are assigned to the age-groups consist of repairing of village roads, ringing of wild animals and some others. They jointly administer the village when they reach councillor's stage and look after the spiritual affairs of the village when they reach the stage of priest.

Among the *Changki* language group the age-group system is very clearly shown. Every three years a new group of boys of ages between twelve and fourteen enters the morung. This group is called *nozabarihori* (unripe gang). These boys must sleep in the morung and have to do a large number of works for the morung and for the senior members. After the completion of three years they reach the next group *tukapbahori* (ripening gang). They are not bound to sleep in the morung and may marry towards the end of their time The duty of this group is to carry messages and to work in general for the village. The next age-group is *chuchenbahori* (morung leader's gang) whose members are the leaders of the morung and in former times used to go on head-hunting expeditions. After this group they become *okchang shamicharihori* (pig's leg eaters) when they get legs of pigs killed at morung feasts. Their duties are the same as that of the previous one. For the next three years they become *kidong mabang* (clan leaders) when they have no duties for the morung and become villagers of standing. The next group is *khonri* (load carriers) when its members are to supply men to carry sacrificial loads and receive a small share of meat from the councillors. At the end

of this period they become *tatari* (councillors) and administer the village with the advice of older groups. They now get the biggest share of meat. Next they become *maozamba telakba* (assistant councillors) and receive a small share of 'councillor's meat'. This group is followed by *maozamba temamba* which represents the age and experience of the village. A few of this group reach the final stage of *patir* or priest, when they look after the spiritual affairs of the village.

MORUNG ORGANISATION : The morung (*arichu*) is organised on the basis of clan. Usually boys belonging to one clan or sometimes to two occupy the same morung. The group of new boys enters the morung in the autumn. They use the inner hearth, the outer one nearer to the door being used by the senior members. The junior boys are responsible for the firewood and water needed for cooking and for keeping a supply of torches in the morung for travellers passing through the village. They have to massage the senior boys, and to sharpen *daos* for them. After the completion of the due period for the junior group, every member of it has to contribute three good logs of wood to the morung in order to reach the next stage. These logs are piled up by the door and used as firewood.

A morung is a sort of miniature form of a village and possesses its own council. A typical council is composed of one *Ungr* (head), one *Tonglu* (deputy head), fourteen *Tatar* (councillor), two *Tingyar* (works overseer) who see that repairs etc. are properly carried out, and two *Yibutir* (*madhu* carrier) who must see that, on the occasions of festivals, the guests are properly served with food and drink. This council, formed by the senior boys, settles all disputes and quarrels arising in the morung and fines of pork are realised from the parents of wrong-doers.

A person, other than a member of a morung, cannot interfere with the internal affairs of the morung. Anyone trying to do so is liable to a fine.

WAR AND HEAD-HUNTING : The Ao Naga practised head-hunting before they came under British subjugation. Every village lived in constant fear of raids by its neighbours, and so remained prepared for such. Every *khel* as a rule recognised a war leader or *tir*, an elderly man who had organised raids but no longer personally took part. Before starting for a raid, the party selected a leader of the advance-guard and a leader of the rear-guard. The common form of attack was a raid on an isolated party working in the fields or laying an ambush by a path. Occasionally two villages would meet by appointment and fight a pitched battle. Supernatural aid was invoked against the foe in all occasions. It consisted of the offering of eggs, release of black cock and in some occasions beheading of dog.

The head taken on a raid were brought to the village and placed on the war-drum. The drum was then beaten vigourously so that the heads danced causing a pleasing spectacle for the villagers. These were then taken to the *tir*'s house and were divided up among the persons responsible for bringing the heads. After the division was complete a man took his portion to his house where it would be fed ceremonially. The heads were then hung from the ends of long bamboo poles which were next leant against the branches of the 'head-tree'. Under the tree the *tir* plucked a fowl alive with the declaration that the heads had been collected as compensation for the sins of the other village and he prayed for more heads, bumper crops and general prosperity of the village in the future. On the sixth day a man took down his portion, cleaned it and hung

it in his house, if he were married, or in the morung if unmarried. The heads were offered food annually. On the death of a head-taker his trophy was placed near the corpse platform.

The underlying philosophy of head-hunting is that the people believe that fertility of land and animals depend on the supply of soul matter. The soul resting in the head of a man goes to the soil and the crops grow in abundance as a result. From the crops the soul matter travels to the animals and men who consume the crops, directly or indirectly, and they become more powerful and fertile. The birth of a larger number of male children would strengthen the village and help in bringing more heads. Thus the cycle moves on and in consequence head-hunting become the central theme of their life.

MARRIAGE : Monogamy is the usual form though polygyny is sometimes met with. A man must not marry a woman of his own phratry or a phratry of another language group which is considered to be corresponding to that of his own. A man may not marry his father's widow, his mother's sister, his father's sister's daughter, or his mother's brother's daughter. The age at marriage for a man is between twenty and twenty five, and that for a woman between fifteen and twenty.

The usual practice for a man is to get intimate with a girl before he decides to marry her. Having informally encouraged by her parents, he asks formally for her hands in marriage. Bride-price is then settled which varies from five to sixty baskets of rice, a leather shield and one or more *daos*. It is paid to the bride's father on the day of marriage. The man constructs a new house where the friends light a fire for the first time on the day of marriage. The groom sets

ready by it some fermented rice, a pot and water. Then he goes to the birde's house accompanied by men of his clan. After a few rituals and ceremonies, the bride comes out of her house and is preceded by three old women upto the new house. The bridegroom does not follow immediately but enters the house when the old women have prepared and drunk rice-beer from the fermented rice. Elaborate ceremonies then follow with much drinking and feasting. In case of a remarriage the couple just cohabits in a house provided by the man and there is no disgrace and wrong in such a marriage.

DIVORCE : Divorce is very common and there is no ceremony for it. The parties simply separate. The rules for division of property are very specific though these are very complicated.

PROPERTY : Four kinds of landed property are recognised which are owned privately or by clan or by morung or by village. The private landed property of a person dying without any heir becomes the property of his clan. Most of the cultivable land belong to the clans and to the different plots of this land a person has usufructuary right. Morung land consists of the tracts near the village on which are found timber and bamboo used for repairing the buildings. The village as a whole owns the lands which are unsuitable for cultivation and which are covered with jungle. Besides landed property the other immovable properties which are privately owned consist of bamboo, betel vines, thatching materials, etc. It is however common to find bamboos belonging to a particular person but the land on which they grow to another. Movable properties e.g. cattle, clothes,. weapons, utensils etc. are owned privately.

INHERITANCE : Property is inherited in the male

line. It is transmitted from a man to his son. In absence of a son it goes to his brother, if available, or his brother's son, and so on. A woman may possess property but she cannot inherit it. A man having only a daughter, may give her landed property and money in exchange of a very nominal payment for the land in his lifetime. In such a case it becomes the private property of the woman in every sense. A man cannot make a will against the custom. All sons inherit equally. A widow gets a portion of the rice, the use of the house and a produce of the husband's land sufficient for her maintenance. Land bought by a woman goes to her son, if any, or to her brother or to other male relative of her father, but it cannot go to her husband. The valuable ornaments of a woman which are bought by her husband go to her husband or his heirs. If these are purchased by herself are her absolute property and she may give them away to her daughter or any one else she likes. These go to her father's heirs at her death if she does not give away to any one. Of the ornaments brought with her at her marriage, half goes to her husband or his heirs and half to her father's heirs.

DEATH AND FUNERAL : Death is ascribed to the activities of the evil spirits. When a man is about to die, his friends and relatives shout at him, stamp on the floor, hammer on the walls and throw water on all sides in order to call back the man and to frighten the evil spirit responsible. When death occurs the nearest relation of the person present there closes the eyes of the dead, washes the face and draws a cloth over it. A fowl is killed near the bed and thrown away in the belief that it will accompany the dead in the other world. For a great warrior or hunter a dog is killed in the same way. The old custom was to put the corpse,

wrapped in cloths, on a platform in the outer room of the house and to light a fire under it so that the body becomes smoke-dried and it was kept till the next harvest. It was then laid out on a platform near the village path. Till the corpse was taken out of the house for final disposal a small portion of every meal was set aside for the deadman. Now-a-days many villages do not dry the corpses at all and these are disposed of on the next day. In some villages it is dried for a short time. Each *khel* has its own crematorium which never changes its location.

RELIGION : They believe that the world is full of malignant spirits, which infest their house, their village, the paths leading to the *jhums*, the fields and the forests. They are always seeking an opportunity for bringing disease and death. Natural calamities are also attributed to them. To satisfy the evil agencies they make numerous annual as well as occasional sacrifices.

They possess a number of gods. The common are *Lunkijingba*—the chief of heaven, *Lizaba*—the chief of earth, and *Mojing*—the chief in the land of departed spirits. The general term for deity is *tsungrem*. The deities of special mention are *Kimung tsungrem* or the house-side deity, *Ki-tsung tsungrem* or house deity and *Arem tsungrem* or jungle deity. *Lunkijingba* is considered to be the highest of all gods and he lives in a stone house in the sky. He fixes the destiny of all men but does not cause any harm to anybody. No communal sacrifice is made to him but he is often individually worshipped for gaining some favours. *Lizaba* is the creator of the earth and is in charge of rain and storms. He sends disease and death to men and is also the distributor of food. He is annually worshipped.

They sacrifice fowls, pigs and dogs to their deities and spirits. They also offer rice-beer, rice, dried meat and

dried fish. The principal agricultural operations are preceded by the worship of *Lizaba*. Besides these each individual also makes sacrifices in one's field granaries. There is no nature worship excepting that of the dwelling spirits of the sun and the moon. Idols are not worshipped but sacrifices are made before big boulders which are regarded as seats of spirits. Divination is widely practised. Magical ideas are also present, the common practice being the observance of a large number of *genna* or taboo.

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10

THE KHASIS

INTRODUCTION : The Khasis, a matriarchal mongoloid tribe of India, reside in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam (now within the State of Meghalaya). In the 1961 Census the Khasi population including Synteng, Bhoi, War and Lynngam has been given as 356,155 souls from which the number for the Khasi only is not obtainable.

They are inhabiting their present habitat for a considerable period, but their legends and traditions indicate that they have come from elsewhere. Rev. H. Roberts, on the basis of the Khasi tradition of sending annual tribute in the form of an axe to the Burmese king, suspects their past subjugation by the Burmese. Another tradition points to the north as the direction from which they have immigrated. Mr. Shadwell is of the opinion that they have migrated from Burma via Patkoi range. Col. Gurdon supposes that they are an offshoot of the Mon people of Further India, and he supports the fact that movements of races into Assam have usually taken place from the east.

Habitat

The Khasi and Jaintia Hills district is situated between 25°1′ and 26°5′ North Latitude and between 90° 47′ and 92°52′ East Longitude. It covers an area of 6,157 sq. miles. The district is split up into two divisions, the Khasi Hills proper—the western portion, and the Jaintia Hills, the eastern portion. The district consists

almost entirely of hills except a very small portion. The elevations of the peaks of the Khasi country varies from 4000 to 6000 ft. above sea level. The slope of the hills is very steep on the southern side until a plateau is met with at an elevation of about 4000 ft. at Cherrapunji. There is another plateau, higher up at Mawphlang. The principal trees of the district are oak, rhododendron, *nageswar* (iron-wood), *sal*, chestnut, birch, bamboo, pandanus (screwpine), orchids, etc. Elephant occupies an important position among the wild animals of the Khasi country ; among others, leopard, deer, pig, buffalo, dog, etc. may be mentioned. Climate of the central plateau of Shillong range is very salubrious, but the low-hill parts are malarious. The rainy season extends from May to October with profuse rainfall especially, at Cherrapunji which has been credited to have the highest annual rainfall in the world.

Physical features

The Khasis are a short statured people, the average height being 1584.4mm., with a mesocephalic head (C. I. 77.81), mesoprosopic face (F. I. 84.73) and a mesorrhine nose (N. I. 76.75). The hair of the head is of medium growth, straight and black and on the face, scanty. The eyeslits are horizontal and the colour of the iris is mainly light brown. The forehead is vertical and of medium height and breadth with a trace of supra-orbital ridges. The nasion depression is shallow, nasal bridge concave and the septum horizontal. Malars are moderately prominent and of small size. There is no alveolar prognathism. The skin colour is usually brown, varying from dark to light yellowish brown. The distribution of ABO blood group among the Khasis, as found by Macfarlane, are A-35·0%, B-18·5%, O-33·0% and AB-13·5%.

Five sets of anthropometric measurements on the Khasis are available, those are of Waddell, Dixon, Guha, Raichaudhuri and Bowles, of which Raichaudhuri's data have been presented here. Another set of blood group data is also available—that of Basu (A-15·6%, B-33·3%, O-46·6% and AB-4·5%), which is very much contradictory to that of Macfarlane. The high frequency of AB of Macfarlane's sample may indicate mixed nature of the sample.

AFFINITY : On analysis of the physical characters, Raichaudhuri found that there are four elements in the composition of the Khasis. These are, dolichocephalic-leptorrhine, dolichocephalic-platyrrhine, brachycephalic-leptorrhine and brachycephalic-platyrrhine. Both Haddon and Dixon consider that dolichocephalic-platyrrhine (pre-Dravidian of Haddon and Negroid of Dixon) is the earliest element in them. But the measurements available indicate that it plays a minor role in the racial composition of the Khasis. It however appears that the dolichocephalic-leptorrhine element which is found throughout Further India was present before the brachycephalic-platyrrhine (Pareoean element) came from Burma.

Mr. J. R. Logan has pointed out a relationship between the Khasis and certain peoples of Further India, the chief representatives of whom are the Mons or Talaings of Pegu, the Khmers of Cambodia, and the majority of the inhabitants of Annam. According to the same authority, the nearest relative of the Khasis is a tribe inhabiting one of the Shan States on the middle Salween.

Linguistically, the Khasis belong to the Mon-Khmer family and they are the only representative of this family in India. Pater Schmidt has established a relationship with the Mon-Khmer and the Munda

language and he also assumed an affinity in physical features with the Munda. In this connection, it may be noted that Macfarlane and Sarkar (1941) has shown, on the basis of blood groups, a relationship with the Mundas and the peoples of East Indian Archipelago, and they also assumed a Pareoean element among the Mundas.

Material Culture

OCCUPATION : Cultivation forms the principal occupation of the Khasis. They practise both dry and wet cultivation and also shifting hill cultivation. The principal crops raised by them are rice, various kinds of millet, maize, potato, orange, betel-nut, pān, cotton, pineapple and pulses and vegetables. They sometimes practise hunting which is rather a sport than an economic activity. They also practise certain amount of fishing. Besides, a large number is employed in transport service for carrying potato, rice, orange and salt. A fair number is employed in the manufacture of country spirit and in domestic service. Carpentry engages a few while a substantial portion is employed in road and building works.

The dry cultivation is done in clayey soil. In winter the sods are turned up with the hoe and are left to dry. After about two months' drying they are collected and burnt and the ashes are strewn over the field. Then the seeds of highland paddy, millet and other crops are sown broadcast. For wet cultivation bottoms of the valleys or depressions between two hills are selected which are divided into a number of blocks with high embankments through which an irrigation channel is carried in such a way that each compartment receives the requisite amount of water. The soil is made into a thick paste by means of the

hoe, and cattle is also driven over the fields to prepare the soil rightly. Seeds are sown broadcast. Later on the fields are weeded and when the ears ripen they are collected, leaving almost the entire stalk. The reaping is done by hands, as it is considered a taboo (*sang*) to use a sickle for reaping. In wet cultivation on manure is used, while in dry one the ashes serve the purpose.

The third method of cultivation is by *jhuming* which is generally restricted to forest lands. In this method trees are felled in early winter and burnt about January-February, and the seeds of paddy and millet are sown broadcast with the appearance of the rains, while the seeds of maize and job's tears are planted in rows at regular intervals with small hoes. The ashes serve the purpose of manure.

The Khasi Hills may be divided into two parts viz., northern and southern on the basis of production of potato and orange respectively. Both these fetch cash currency from the plains of the state and outside. Of these, potato is seasonal crop and is raised in *jhum* method. As more potato meant more money there developed a tendency to exploit a particular plot year after year without leaving any chance for secondary growth of vegetation. On the other hand, a man tried to cultivate as much land as he could which was not the case before potato became a cash crop. The consequences became disastrous both with respect to the fertility of the soil and the production of grains together with hampering weaving and other indigenous art and craft.

To the Khasis hunting is a sport rather than any substantial economic activity. In hunting they use bows, arrows, spears, nooses etc. A spring-gun (*ka riam siat*) is a device by which deer is hunted. It is

laid alongside a deer path, across the path a string is stretched which releases a bolt and a spring when touched by the animal. The spring in turn, releases a bamboo arrow with great force across the path. Pit falls are generally provided with bamboo-spikes at the bottom. For big games they sometimes use a special device by preparing a platform on a pit and a weighted roof above. On the platform is kept a bait which brings the animal on the platform. The platform sinks under the weight of the animal, and a bolt is released which brings down the weighted roof to crush the animal to death. Trained dogs are also used in hunting. Before starting the hunting party breaks eggs to secure success in hunting.

The most prevalent method of fishinig is by poisoning the stream. They do not use nets or bamboo traps for this purpose. The source of poison is certain trees and creepers. A quantity of these is brought near the stream and pounded to extract the juice which is mixed up with the stream water. This either stupifies or even kills the fish which soon begin to float on the surface of the water and are collected.

FOOD : The staple diet of the Khasis is rice. Potato has taken now-a-days second position. Rice is taken with curry and dried fish. Fresh fish is also taken. They take meat of nearly all kinds of animal including field-rats and a kind of monkey, with special preference for beef and pork. They do not take dog's meat. The curry made from a kind of green frog is considered with relish. Formerly they did not like milk, and milk products, except the Christian converts, but now-a-days these are consumed extensively. An important food item of them is the soft inner portion of the bark of the sago-palm tree which when pounded after drying, gives a reddish flour of sweet taste.

They are very fond of taking pān and betel-nuts. Chewing of betel-nut is so much a pleasure to them that they fancy of heaven as a huge betel-nut garden i. e., abundance of betel-nuts. Of the drink, they are addicted either to the spirit distilled from rice or millet, or rice-beer.

IMPLEMENTS AND WEAPONS : The agricultural implements of the Khasis are very few. They include two varieties of hoe—one large and the other small —which consist of a wooden or bamboo shaft to which is attached a triangular iron blade with a long tang, inserted into the shaft at an acute angle ; axe, varieties of *dāos* and sickle.

The principal weapons of offence include bows and arrows, spears and swords. Bows are made of bamboo, about five feet in length with a string made of split-bamboo. Arows are of two varieties—with barbed head (*kipliang*) and barbless (*sop*). Arrows are also made of bamboo with iron heads. Bird's feathers are attached at the rear end of the arrow-shaft. The spears are made of bamboo or wooden shafts with iron blade. No decoration of the shafts are found. These are of considerable size, some six and a half feet in length. Swords are generally made of wrought iron, sometimes of steel. The handle and the blade are made of the same material. The arrow-heads, spear-heads and the swords are all manufactured by local smiths.

At present shields, the only defence weapon, are rarely used. These are circular in shape studded with brass or silver. Formerly, rhinoceros hide was used in making shields but now-a-days buffalo skin is used.

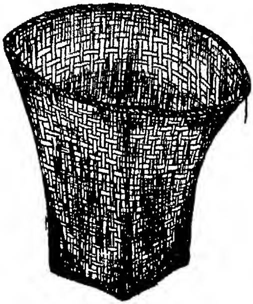
HABITATION : The Khasi villages are situated little below the hill-tops, generally in small depressions, as



1



2



3

KHASI : 1. A typical orthodox hut
2. Tanged hoe
3. Basket

opposed to the Nagas and Kukis who build their villages on the summits of the hills. The villages are dwelt for generations and family tombs and memorial stones (*mawbynna*) are met with in almost every village. The houses are built without any definite system, those are simply juxtaposed. There is no discrimination in housing site with respect to social and economic status of an individual. Sacred groves of the village tutelary deity are to be seen in the vicinity of a village. It is considered as a breach of taboo to cut trees of such groves, save for the purpose of funeral.

A traditional Khasi house is oval shaped with low roof and a small door, with only one window. The house is erected on a plnith, some two to three feet above the ground. The roof-beams are so low that it is difficult for a man of average height to stand erect in the centre. The walls are made of planks or stone, and the roof is thatched with grass. Entire hut is divided into three rooms—a porch, a centre-room and a retiring room. Now-a-days, of course, houses are rectangular and corrugated iron sheets and kerosene oil tins are used for walls and roof. In the central room fire is always kept burning in earthen or stone hearth, in the porch are stacked the fuel and every odds and ends. Cattle and pigs are generally kept in little houses outside the main building. Well-to-do khasis have bungalows of modern style with iron roof, chimneys and glass windows and doors. Inside of the houses are clean and comfortable.

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS : Paddy is husked in a wooden mortar with a heavy wooden pestle. Husked rice is sifted in a bamboo seive or with the help of a winnowing fan. Large bamboo receptacles are used to store paddy. Cooking pots are made of iron, those used by poor people are earthenwares. Spoons and

ladles for stirring the contents are made of brass. Dishes are made of brass and they are of different varieties. Drinking vessels made of brass and of hollowed-out gourds are used. For storage of water they use bamboo cylinders and also brass water-pots.

Among furniture, they have wooden bed-steads, mattresses, and pillows. Poorer people sleep on bamboo plaited mats spread on bare boards. Clothes are kept on cloth-racks. Besides, there are wooden stools of different size for sitting in the kitchen and in the main room. Rain-shields (*ki-knup*) made of bamboo-splits which are of various size and shape are common in every Khasi house. Another common ariticle of Khasi material culture is the different varieties of carrying baskets (*ki-khoh*) which are carried on the back slung across the forehead by a cane head-strap. These baskets are conical in shape with broad-mouthed top and gradually tapering at the bottom. A mouth-cover is used to protect the contents of the basket which is also made of bamboo.

DRESS AND PERSONAL DECORATION : The traditional male dress of the Khasis consists of a small cloth worn round the waist and between the legs, one end of which hangs down in front like a small apron. On the upper part of the body they wear a sleeveless coat (*jymphong*) leaving the arms and the neck bare. This coat has a fringe at the bottom and a row of tassels across the chest. On head they wear a cap with ear-flaps. At present, of course, shirts and pants of European style are much in vouge.

In general, Khasi women are excessively clothed. At first a piece of cloth (*ka-jympien*) is worn round next to skin and fastened at the loins with a kind of cloth-belt which hangs from waist down to the knees. Over this is worn a long piece of cloth (*ka jain sem*)

which hangs below the knee and is tied at the waist. On this, again, a cloak-like garment is thrown over the shoulders the ends of which are knotted in front. These garments especially the cloak, are of bright colours, preferably maroon, gray, etc.

Both Khasi males and females are fond of jwellery. Necklaces of gold or large and round coral beads are very much liked by both the sexes. Earrings are worn by both men and women—those worn by women are different in pattern from those of the men's. Silver chains are also worn by both the sexes—women wear it round their neck while men wear round their waist like a belt. Silver and gold bracelets are worn by women. There are two peculiar ornaments,—one is a crown made of gold or silver ornamented filigree work and is provided at the back with a spike, some six inches long, and silver tassels hanging down the back ; and the other is a broad and flat silver collar which is hung in front over the neck and fastened behind. The crown is worn by young women at dances

Social Organisation

DIVISIONS : The Khasi and Jaintia Hills are inhabited by a number of other tribes who speak dialects of Khasi origin. They are Syntengs or Pnars, Wars, Bhois and Lynngams. Apparently these dialects are so much dissimilar as to be unrecognisable. These tribes are not strictly endogamous, rather they are more so than exogamous and intermarriages are not encouraged. It is considered a disgrace on the part of a Khasi to marry a War, Bhoi or Lynngam woman. The Khasis themselves are sub-divided into the inhabitants of the central high plateau, Mairo, Nongkhlaw, and the adjoining siemships. These territorial divisions are further divided into a number of clans.

CLAN : Khasi clans are strictly exogamous and the greatest sin a Khasi can commit is to marry within the same clan. The clans are ancestral although some of the clans are named after animals (e. g., *shrieh* = monkey, *tham* = crab) and trees (e. g., *diengdoh* = a kind of tree), but these are never considered as their totems nor they exhibit any regard · towards these animals or objects.

Most of the clans trace their descent from ancestresses (*kiaw* = grand mother) and in some clans the name of the ancestress survives. *Ka Iwabei* is the most reverenced ancestress of the Khasis and they consider her as the first mother, and in her honour a number of flat table-stones are erected in front of the menhirs. The clan ancestresses are almost deified and they are regularly worshipped, although no idol is made. Their legends indicate that these ancestresses are plains women carried off in the raids.

Each clan is sub-divided into a number of sub-clans (*kpoh*). It does not possess any independent function. Possibly it had an ossuary where the uncalcined bones of a member were deposited temporarily before their final disposal in the clan-ossuary.

FAMILY : The smallest social unit of the Khasis is the *iing*, literally meaning a 'house', i. e., family. A family is composed of the grandmother, her daughters, their husbands and children. The permanent members are the daughters who, after their marriage, settle in their mother's family along with their husbands. When the married daughters with their husbands and children build separate house, they do it in their mother's compound. The sons, after their marriage naturally, go to reside with their wives and hence are not permanent members of a family. Within the household the brothers and sisters have similar rights but

as a man settles down in the house of the wife's mother, the continuity of family traditions is maintained by the women of the house.

KINSHIP : The Khasis possess a type of classificatory system of reckoning kins. In this system certain kins are grouped under the same kinship term ; for example, same term is applied to the mother, step-mother, mother's sisters and father's brothers' wives ; similarly, the father, step-father, father's brothers and mother's sisters' husbands are grouped together. Mother's brothers and father's sisters' husbands have a common term, so also the mother's brother's wife and father's sister. But mother's brother and his wife is distinguished from the father's sister and her husband by adding an adjective indicating seniority or juniority by age (e. g., M. B. W.=*knia*, F. S.=*knia kha* ; and F. S. H.=*Ma*, M. B.=*Ma Rangbah* or *Ma Khynnah*). The actual father is designated by the term *U Kpa* and the actual mother by *Ka Kmie*. Mother's elder and younger sisters are designated by *Kmie San* and *Kmie Nah* respectively. The mother's sisters' husbands are comparable to the father as these men have married the women of the same house, and accordingly they are designated by the terms, *Kpa San* or *Kpa Nah*.

In Khasi society the mother's brother has an important position. He is in charge of the management of mother's ancestral property and helps in performing important social ceremonies. On father's side the similar relative is the father's sister who is the repository of the bones of the father's family. Thus, in the Khasi society, a man though occupies a less important position in his wife's family, exerts considerable power over the children of his sisters, being their mother's brother, in the management of ancestral property and in performing ceremonial rites.

Same term is applied by a man to his sister's children and by a woman to her brother's children, which is different from that used for their own children.

A Khasi woman cannot marry her father's brother's son nor her mother's brother's son. The son of father's sister may, however, be married only after the death of the father. Because they believe that the death of the father and subsequent return of his bones to his house of birth breaks all connections with the children and their mother. The restriction imposed on marrying the son of mother's brother is, however, not loosened after the death of this uncle, because his bones will come back to the mother's family. For similar reason marriage between parallel cousins is prohibited.

MARRIAGE : The Khasis are strictly monogamous. Polyandry is unknown to them and polygyny cannot flourish because of matriarchate social structure. Marriage between the members of the same clan is strictly prohibited. Both parallel cousin and cross cousin marriages are prohibited with the exception that a girl may marry her father's sister's son after the death of the father.

Adult marriage is the rule ; the marriageable age for a Khasi man is between 17 to 25 and for a woman is 13 to 18 years. A young man first selects a girl of his choice from among his acquaintances and informs his parents and uncles who make necessary arrangements. On the day of marriage a man is selected from the party of the bridegroom called, *U ksiang* who acts as go-between. The bridegroom then sets out with this man and a number of followers clothed in clean garments and wearing either red or white head-dresses. On the bride's side also a *ksiang* is appointed. These two *ksiangs* take the leadership in the marriage ceremony.

Elaborate ceremonies are observed in connection with marriage. The three ceremonies by which marriage is brought about are, *Pynhiar Synjat*, *Lamdoh* and *Iadih-Kiad*. The first two are practised by rich people.

A man divorced from his wife cannot marry her sister during the lifetime of the divorced wife. In normal cases also, where divorce is not a factor, a man cannot marry his wife's sister in the lifetime of his wife, and can do so one year after the death of the wife. Mr. Cantlie remarks that a man may have informal alliance with a woman but formally he can marry one wife only. He refers in this connection to two distinct terms for these two kinds of wives—*ka tnga trai* (real wife) and *ka tnga tuh* (stolen wife).

DIVORCE.: In the Khasi society divorce is frequent and is easily obtained. Both the parties must agree before seeking a divorce. The reasons for divorce are various, such as, barrenness, adultery, incompatibility of temperament, etc. When one of the parties does not agree for a divorce a complicated situation arises which is tackled by the village elders by imposing a compensational fine. Usually the husband is unwilling to divorce his wife, and hence the fine is imposed on the wife. Divorced parties cannot remarry amongst themselves but may do so in other families. A woman cannot be divorced during pregnancy. Where marriages were performed in *Pynhiar Synjat* form, the two *ksiangs* and the maternal uncles of the parties are necessary to witness the divorce.

SUCCESSION : In Khasi society the most common office is the house of the youngest daughter (*Iing-Khadduh*) of the family. The holder of this office i. e., the youngest daughter (*Ka Khadduh*) is responsible for the performance of the family religious rites and ceremonies especially, those connected with its ancestress. For this responsibility she is entitled to a larger share

of the family property. Mr. Cantlie has given the list of successors to *Iing Khadduh,* in order of preference, which is reproduced below :—

1. Mother's youngest daughter.
2. Youngest daughter's youngest daughter.
3. On failure of the youngest daughter's stock, the next younger daughter of the mother.
4. Youngest daughter of the next younger daughter.
5. Failing all the daughters and their female stock, the office of the *Iing Khadduh* would be absorved in the *Iing Khadduh* of the mother's family.

Mr. Cantlie states that as the youngest daughter has to perform the family religious rites including the worship of the ancestress and final deposition of the bones of all members under the clan-stone (*maw-bah*), she is given the largest share of the family property. But she has not the right to dispose of the property, she is only the custodian of the same ; and she performs her duties in consultation with her brothers, uncles and father. Spread of modern education and Christianity has resulted certain complications as to the rights and duties of the office of the youngest daughter. Christian *Ka Khadduhs* are not eligible to perform the traditional religious rites but such women demand the larger share of the property by virtue of their being youngest daughters, and they try to establish that they are the sole heiress of the portion of the property with the right of disposal.

The rule of succession to the office of the chieftainship is little different from that of *Iing Khadduh* though it also follows female line. The sons of the eldest uterine sister succeed to this office in order of priority of birth. In the absence of male heirs to the eldest uterine sister it passes to the male children of the next eldest sister, and so on

INHERITANCE : Inheritance of property also follows the female line. All movable properties of the family and the house are inherited by the youngest daughter. As regards immovable or landed property, other than the house, there may be two alternatives—mother may keep intact the entire property of the family and leave it to her youngest daughter or, she may separate portions of the property and give one to each of her daughters during her life time ; but in the latter case also a larger share is kept apart for the youngest daughter. As has already been mentioned the youngest daughter has not absolute right of disposal over the property, while her elder sisters are entitled to have the same over their shares.

Ancestral property is inherited according to the rule of matriarchy and ultimogeniture, but a male may inherit in the absence of a suitable heiress, though he is to find a proper female of the family to look after the same. In the same way a female owner of the property may also choose another woman of her family to inherit her property provided she has no proper person to inherit.

In the case of the acquired property of a female there is no difficulty as its disposal is governed by rules dealing with the ancestral property. Acquired property of a man, before his marriage, goes to the common family fund of the mother while that after marriage, a portion may be given away during his lifetime to his clan members and the rest is left to his wife and children for their maintenance.

POLITICAL ORGANISATION : The Khasi state is formed by the voluntary association of villages or groups of villages. The head of the state is the *Siem* or chief. The authority of the *Siem* is very limited. He cannot perform any important act without consulting

his *darbar* which is an executive council having judicial powers. The *Siem* manages his state business through the *mantris* i. e., the members of the *darbar*. In some states there are village headmen, known as, *sirdars* who have both judicial and administrative powers.

The chief is entitled to receive the income from the *raj* or state lands, which is realised in the form of voluntary contribution by the tillers of such lands, and this subscription is known as *pynsuk*. The principal source of income of the chief is the toll (*khrong*) which he takes from those who sell at the markets of his territory. Judicial fines are divided between the chief and the members of the *darbar*.

Siems come from *Siem*-families. But the particular person who will be a *Siem* must be elected. In certain states they are elected by the heads of some specified important clans, while in others the whole adult population takes part in the election.

DEATH & FUNERAL : The Khasis cremate the dead body. The corpse is first placed in a wooden coffin which is put on a bamboo bier and carried on shoulders to the cremation ground in a procession of the relatives. The coffin with the corpse is laid on the funeral pyre with the head to the west. Fire is applied to the pyre first by the *kur* (clan) members and then by the children of the deceased. Several sacrifices are made both before and after cremation, and various kinds of eatables are offered to the spirit of the deceased. When the body has been thoroughly burnt the fire is extinguished and the uncalcined bones are collected and carried to the family depository (*mawshieng*) where those are finally placed. For three days eatables are offered at the *mawshieng* and during this period relatives look for footprints which are believed to indicate future events.

The family of the deceased observes three night's mourning after cremation when, it is considered a *sang* (taboo) to do any work. The taboo is removed by bathing and washing. After one month when it is believed that the spirit of the dead has reached the garden of God, a fowl or pig is sacrificed.

It is interesting to note that the *Siem* family of Cherrapunji does not cremate the corpse of a *Siem* immediately after his death because it is the duty of the next *Siem* to perform the funeral rites of the last one. Moreover, a *Siem's* funeral entails considerable expenditure. For these reasons the dead body of a Cherrapunji *Siem* is preserved for years together. For preservation, the corpse is first immersed in liquour for three days and it is saturated with lime juice, after this it is placed in a coffin and kept in the chief's house for final disposal.

RELIGION : The traditional religion of the Khasis may be described as a form of animism or propitiation of spirits, good and evil, with main stress on the worship of the ancestral spirits. Both ancestors and other spirits are propitiated by offering food to them annually or at times when it is thought necessary to invoke their aid.

Ka Iawbei is the most reverenced ancestress of the Khasis, a large number of flat table-stones seen in front of the Khasi menhirs are erected in her honour. *Ka Iawbei* is considered to be the first mother. The next ancestor in importance is *U Suid-Nia* or *U Kni Rangbah,* the elder brother of *Ka Iawbei* i. e., the first maternal uncle. A big central menhir is erected in his honour, in the Khasi line of menhirs. Besides these two principal ancestors they also rever the first father, the husband of *Ka Iawbei*, known as *U Thawlang*. On occasions of domestic trouble a cock is sacrificed to him.

Besides these ancestral spirits they also propitiate a number of other spirits such as, *U lei muluk*, the spirit of the state who is propitiated annually by sacrificing a goat and a cock ; *U lei umtong*, the spirit of water for drinking and cooking purpose who is also propitiated annually; *U lei longspah*, the spirit of wealth and prosperity ; *U Rynghew* or *U Basa Shnong*, the tutelary deity of the village who is propitiated whenever it is considered necessary. There are other minor deities mainly responsible for diseases, such as, *Ka Rih*, the spirit of the malarial fever, *Ka Khlam*, the spirit of cholera ; *Ka Duba*, the spirit of fever.

All the propitiations are performed by priests (*lyngdoh*). They also perform sacrifices for the good of the state and for private purpose, and in executing the sacrifice he is assisted by a priestess and actually acts as her assistant. This fact may be an indication of the survival of the ancient custom of female dominance in public religious acts.

They have no conception, or have a vague one, about the supreme God. Their idea about the after-world is that of a garden full of betel-nut trees and they fancy that their deceased ancestors are chewing betel-nuts uninterruptedly.

They believe in divination and the most common divinatory rite is performed by breaking eggs.

The religious beliefs of the present day Khasis have been much modified influnced, in the main, by Christian and Hindu religious concepts. A large section of the population has been converted to Christianity. Among the unconverts also retention of the traditional concepts has much been affected by western education, neighbouring Hinduism and acceptance of different foreign culture traits.

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